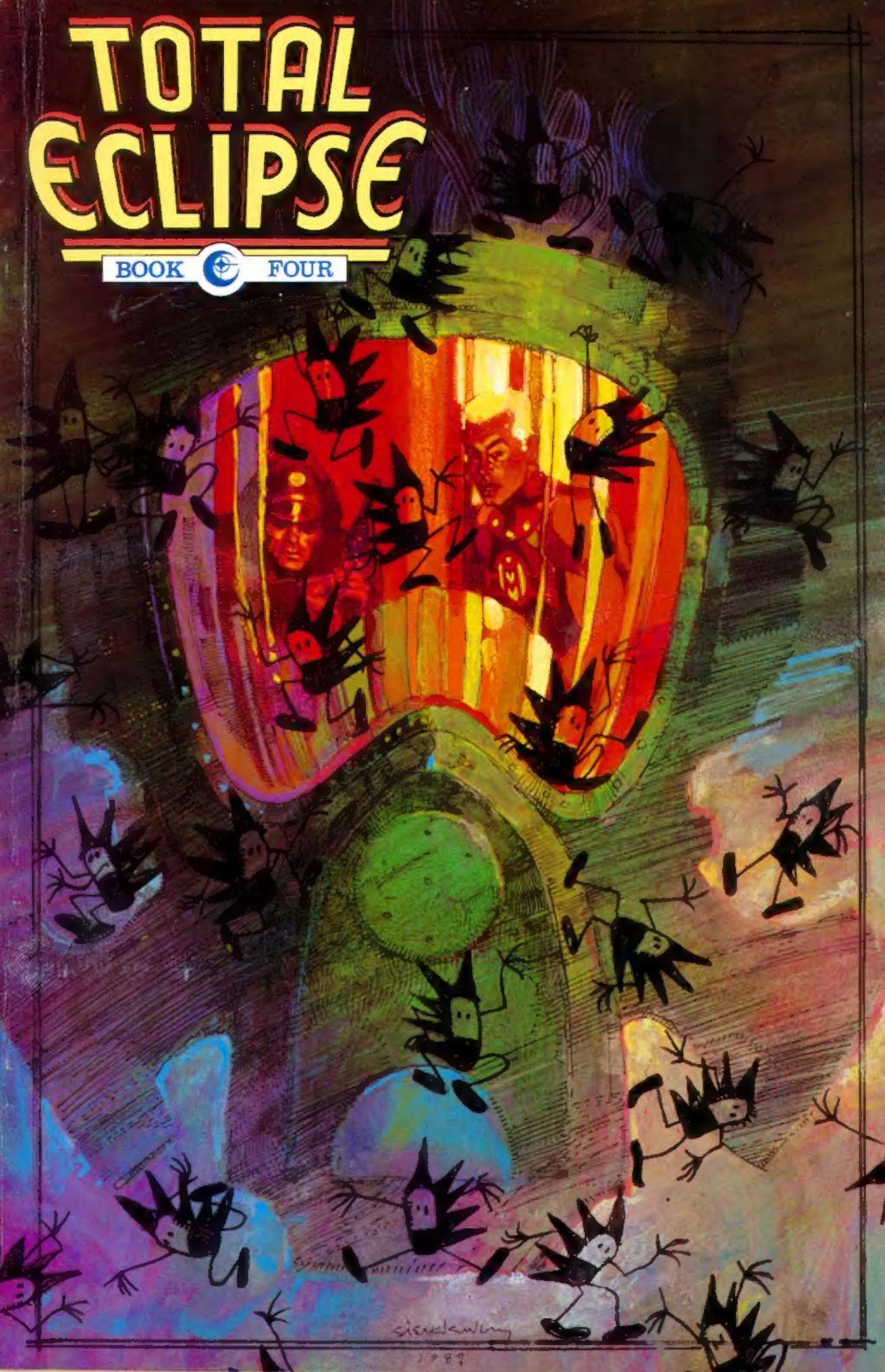


TOTAL ECLIPSE

BOOK FOUR



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TOTAL ECLIPSE

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HIS NAME IS
ZZED,
AND FOR MORE
THAN THIRTY
THOUSAND YEARS
HE HAS DESPER-
ATELY WISHED
HE COULD DIE.

HE HAS BEEN
CURSED WITH
IMMORTALITY. HE
HAS SUFFERED
THE DEATHS OF
EVERY MAN AND
WOMAN HE HAS
EVER KNOWN OR
LOVED. FOR THE
PAST TEN THOU-
SAND YEARS, HE
HAS BEEN MAD.

BUT THEN VOICES SPOKE TO HIM, VOICES
THAT INSTRUCTED HIM HOW TO BUILD
MACHINES WHICH WOULD FINALLY GRANT
HIM THE GIFT OF DEATH. INSANE, HE
FOLLOWED THE WORDS, NEVER KNOWING
HE WAS BEING MANIPULATED TO DE-
STROY NOT ONLY HIMSELF, BUT EVERY
BEING IN EVERY TIME.

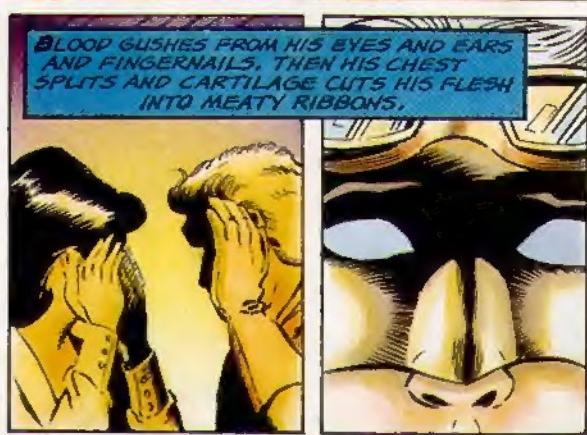
AND HE
RISES FROM
HIS BODY--
A THING OF
REBORN
SPIRIT--
SEEKING
KNOWLEDGE.
AND HE
TRAVESES
THE PLANES
OF REALITY
AS EASILY
HE SOARS
THE INFI-
NITE COSMOS.

THEN, AT LAST, AT THE MOMENT OF SEEING
TRIUMPH, ANOTHER INTERFERED. ANOTHER
WHO WAS STRUCK BY THE LIGHT WHICH WAS
SUPPOSED TO DESTROY ZZED. ANOTHER WHO
TOOK THE **BRUNT** OF THE ENERGY AND DIS-
APPEARED WITHIN, LETTING ONLY A **FRACTION**
SLIP PAST HIM TO BATHE THE IMMORTAL IN
A RAY WHICH WOULD NOT KILL HIM, BUT
ALTER HIM FOREVER.

HE IS NOW
FREE OF ALL
RESTRAINTS
AS NO OTHER
MAN HAS
EVER BEEN
BEFORE.

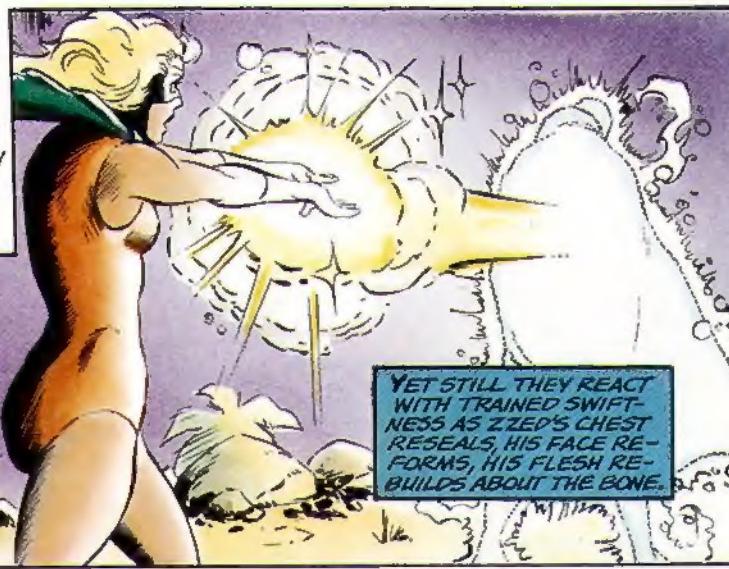


HE IS ALIVE HERE IN THE INFINITE. ALIVE, QUESTIONING, QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTS PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN TO THINGS OF FLESH THAT HE INGESTS WITH HUNGERING FEROCITY.



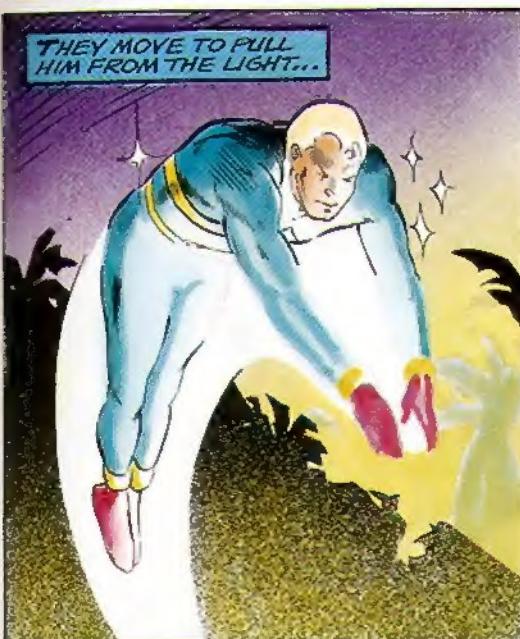
HE IS ALIVE AS NO OTHER MAN HAS EVER BEEN BEFORE.

THEIR FRIEND IS GONE, LOST TO THE LIGHT WHICH ZZED HAD SUMMONED FOR HIMSELF. TACHYON IS DEAD, THEY BELIEVE, AND THOUGH HE STILL LIVES, PUSHED THROUGH SPACE TO ANOTHER WORLD, THEIR GRIEF AND PAIN IS ALL TOO AGONIZING.



YET STILL THEY REACT WITH TRAINED SWIFTNESS AS ZZED'S CHEST RESEALS, HIS FACE REFORMS, HIS FLESH REBUILDS ABOUT THE BONE.

THEY MOVE TO PULL HIM FROM THE LIGHT...



...BUT THEY FAIL.



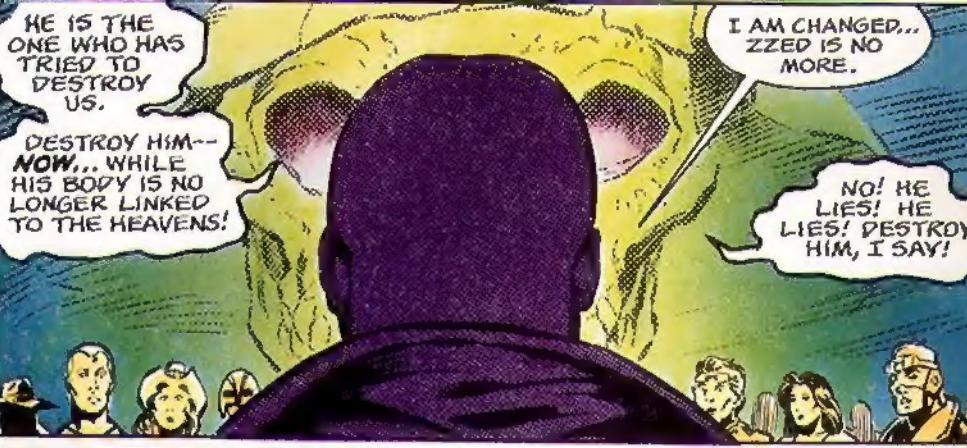
THERE ARE WORLDS HERE WHERE LIFE EXISTS IN DEGREES, OR INTENSITIES. WORLDS WITH CONCEPTS THAT ARE MEASURES OF SOUND OR LIGHT. WORLDS THAT BREATHE AND WORLDS THAT NO LONGER CAN, AND HE GREEDILY MAKES THEM HIS...

ALL THEY CAN DO IS HELPLESSLY WATCH AS THE LIGHT PULSES WITH UNEARTHLY INTENSITY AND COLOR. AS ZZED'S BODY GROWS AND CHANGES, AND THEN RISES WITH NEW LIFE.

AND THEN THE LIGHT FADES,

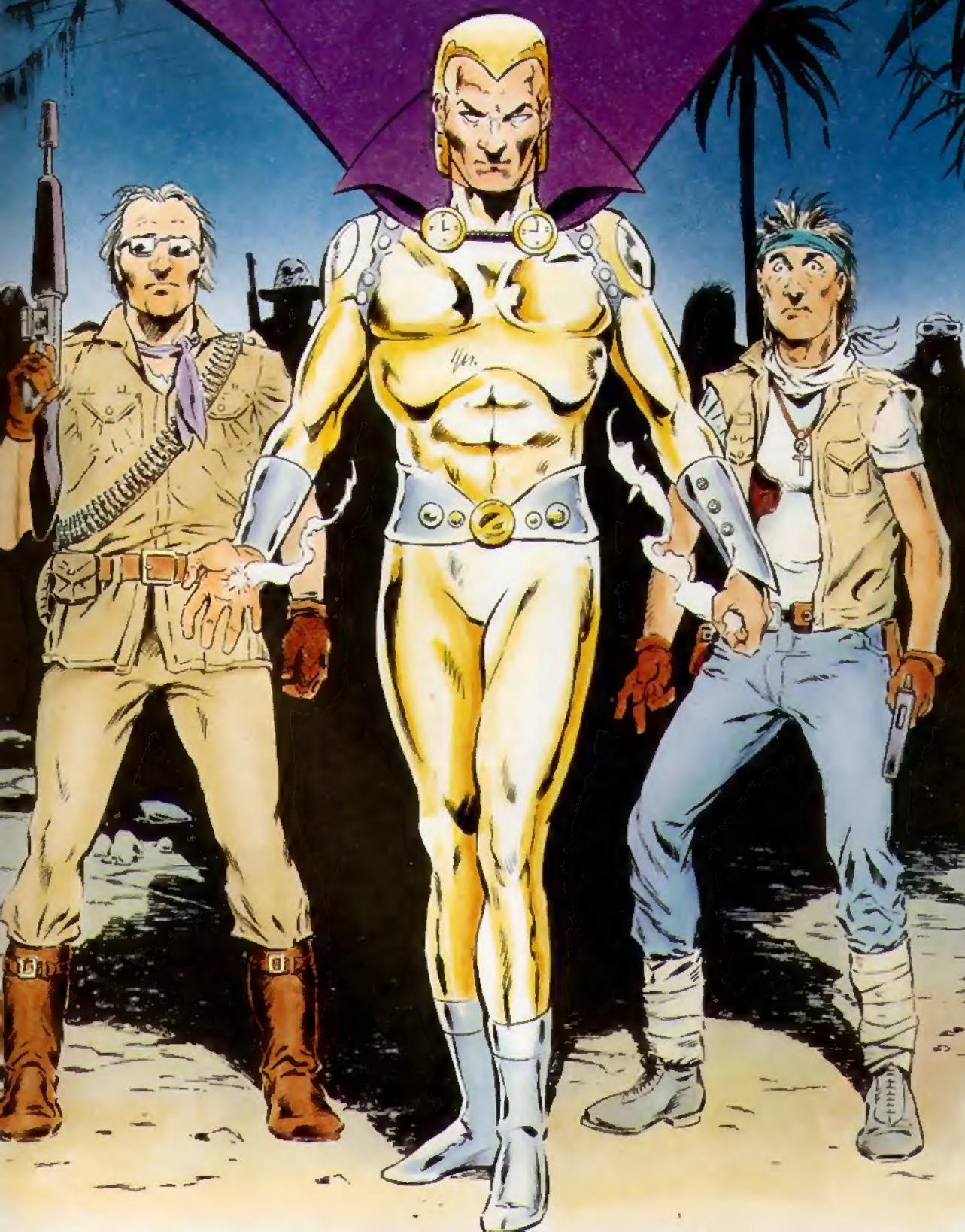
HE SEES AND LEARNS AS NO OTHER MAN HAS EVER BEFORE.

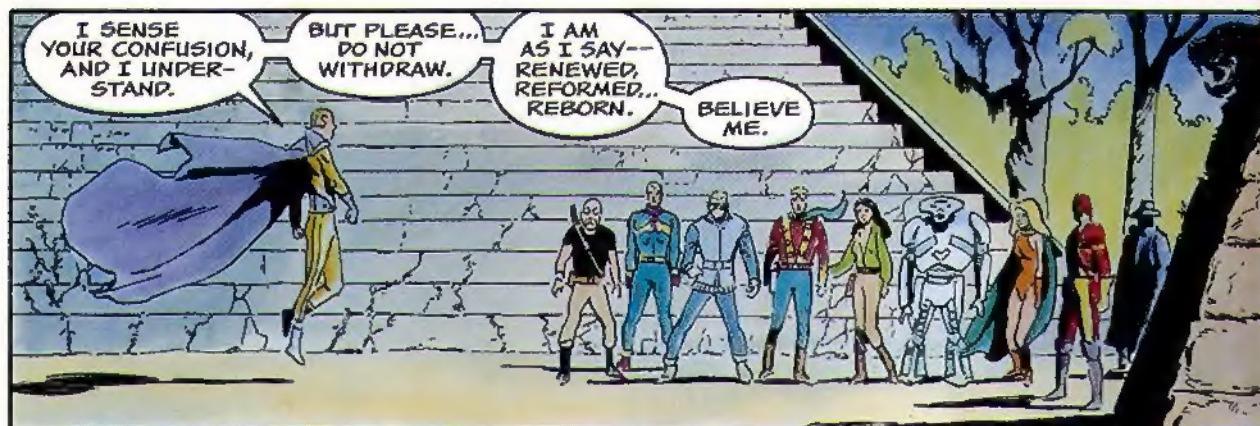


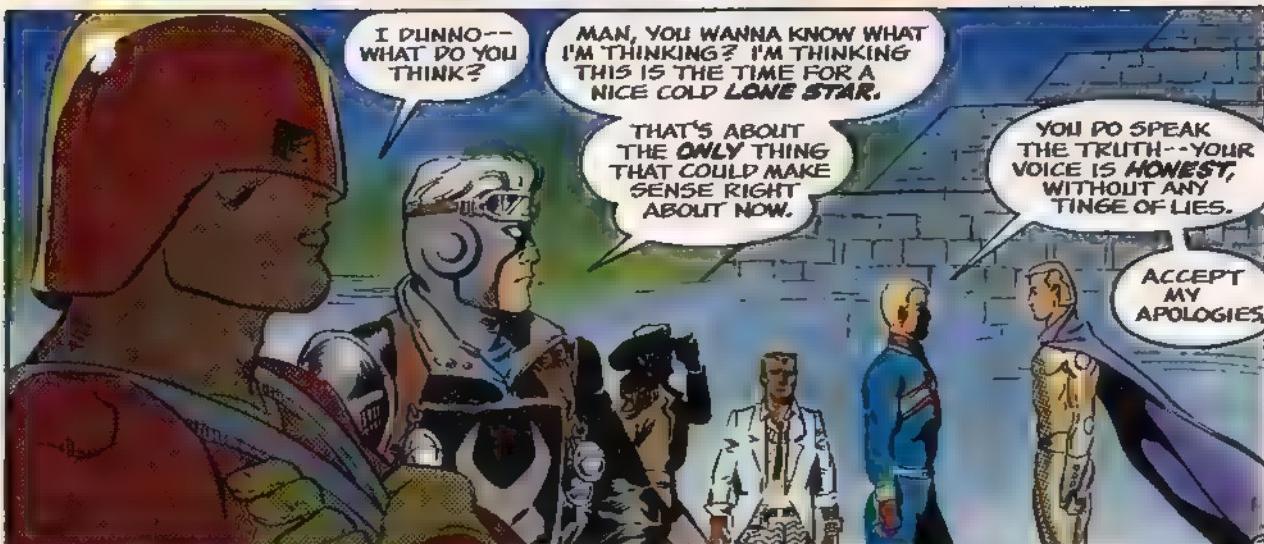
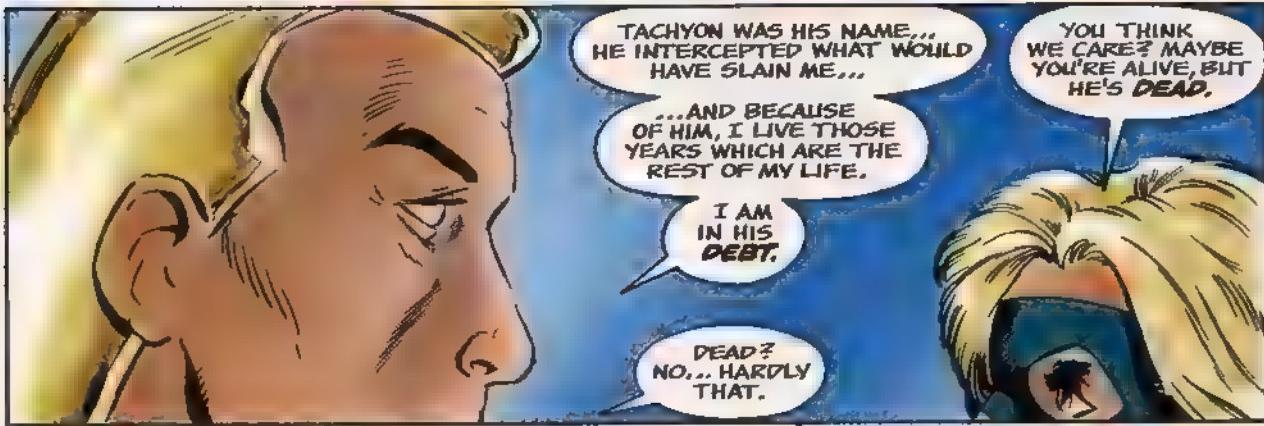


THIS IS...

REBIRTH!







I SAW THE FUTURE, IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT. LIKE THE IMAGE ONE SEES FROM THE CORNER OF ONE'S EYE.

DO YOU WISH TO KNOW YOUR FATE?

NO--
I PREFER
TO DEAL WITH
IT AS IT
COMES.

AS
YOU
WISH.

MY FRIENDS,
WHAT ALTERED
ME FROM THE
MADMAN ZZED--
BEING STILL
LIVES...

...AND
HE STILL
THREATENS
OUR VERY
EXISTENCE.

WE
MUST
ACT
BEFORE
IT IS
TOO
LATE.

HEY, WHO DIED
AND MADE YOU
BOSS?

GREAT.
JUST WHAT
WE NEED.
ANOTHER
ANAL
RETENTIVE
SUPERHERO
TYPE.

SO WOTTA YOU GONNA CALL
YOURSELF, HOT-SHOT? CAPTAIN
BLANK EYES? MAJOR WONDER-
FUL? HOWZABOUT PRIVATE
PERFECT PERSON.

MAN, I TELL
YA--THIS SUPER-
HERO NAME CRAP
MAKES ME
SICK.

WE
GONNA SAVE
THE UNIVERSE
--OR SET UP
SOME LOUSY
900 NUMBER
FOR KIDS TO
DECIDE WHAT
TO CALL
YOU?

WAIT--
I KNOW...

BECAUSE
I WANT HIM
TO HEAL MY
SPECIAL FRIEND
WHO IS DARK
BECAUSE
OF THE
ECLIPSE--

--WHY
DON'T YOU
CALL YOURSELF
DOCTOR
ECLIPSE?

FOR YOU,
MY FRIEND,
I WILL TAKE
WHATEVER
SOBRIQUET
YOU PREFER.

IN YOUR
Honor, CALL
ME DOCTOR
ECLIPSE.

HEY,
ANYBODY
FORGET--

WE'VE
STILL
GOT THE
PROBLEM.

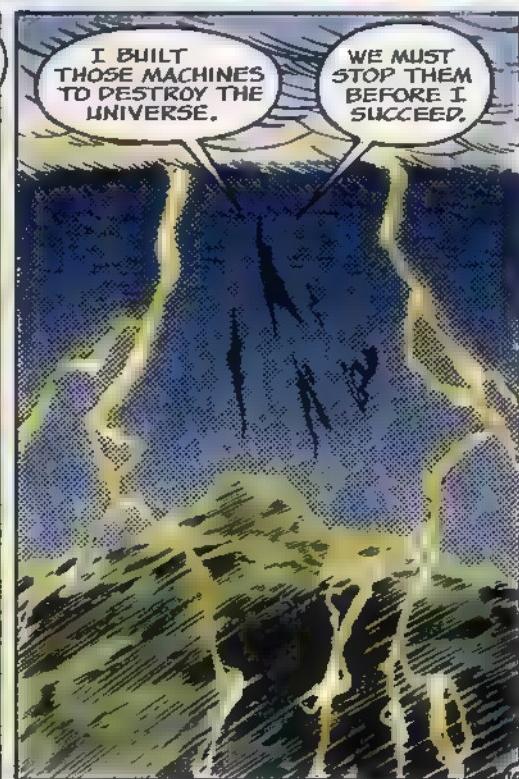
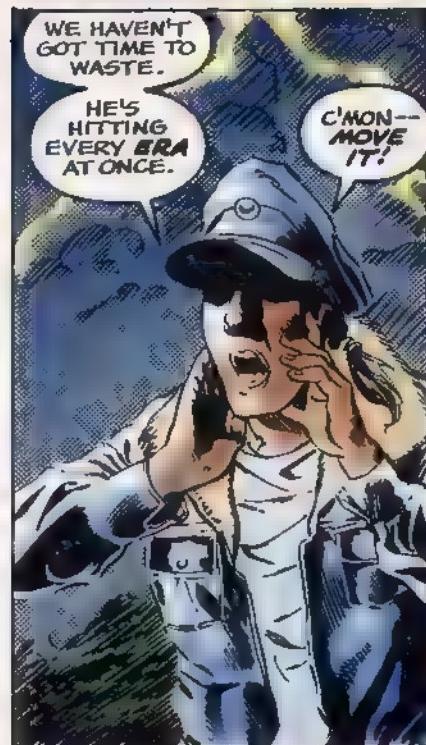
TAKE A
LOOK!



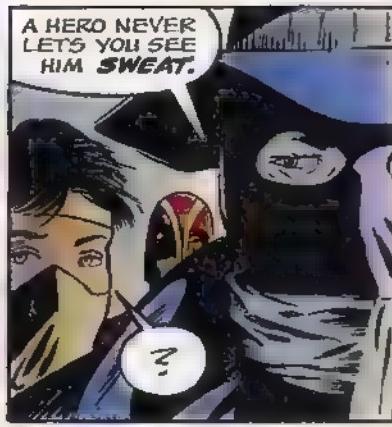
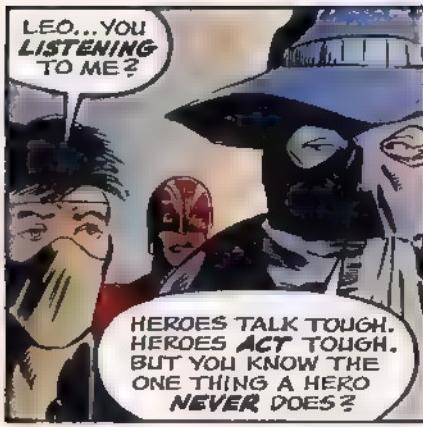
WHAT
IN HELL
IS GOING
ON?

MY
GOD!









SHE PAUSES, READYING
HERSELF, WHEN A SLIM
FORM PUSHES AHEAD...

...AND TURNED AS
THE SATELLITE EVEN
AS IT PULLS AWAY...

SHE FOLLOWS.
MIRACLEMAN
IS TO ONE SIDE,
DR. ECLIPSE
TO HER OTHER...

...AND THEY
SLIP THROUGH
TIME GONE
MAD!!

'THOSE WHO
IGNORE THE
PAST ARE
DOOMED TO
REPEAT IT...
REPEAT IT...
REPEAT IT...
REPEAT IT...
REPEAT IT...

SURROUNDING THEM
IS PAST, PRESENT,
AND FUTURE...

...HOPES AND DREAMS CAN BE CAUGHT
WITHIN A MOMENTARY GLANCE, BEFORE
OTHER ERAS CAUSE DISRUPTION.

THE FUTURE IS
THERE, WITHIN
REACH, WITHIN
TOUCH.

IGNORE YOUR GOAL,
AVALON. YOUR FUTURE
OFFERS TEMPTATION...
GIVE IN... GIVE IN...

AN ELECTRICAL FLASH EXPLODES
WITHIN MIRACLEMAN'S SIGHT.
INSIDE IT IS GARGUNZA SETTING
UP MICHAEL MORAN FOR THE IN-
CREDIBLE CHANGES THAT AWAIT.

I KNOW IT
IS DIFFICULT
BUT YOU MUST
FIGHT IT!
FIGHT OFF
THESE PASTS
AND FUTURES--
OR THE PRESENT
WILL BE
DESTROYED!

YOU CAN STOP IT NOW, MIRACLE-
MAN-- STOP IT BEFORE IT BEGINS...
STOP IT BEFORE LIZ MEETS YOU
AND HER LIFE IS DESTROYED.

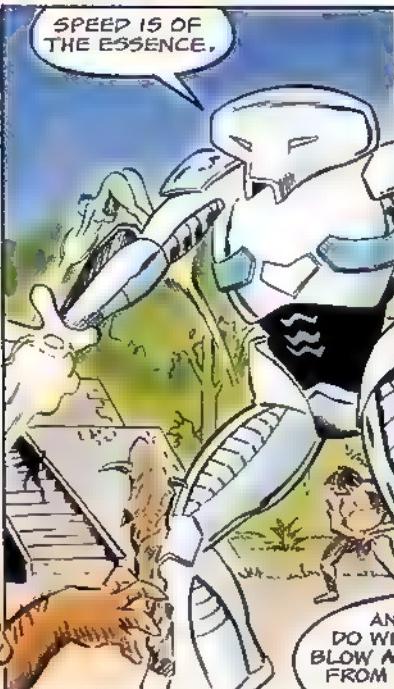
THEY TURN AWAY, ALTERATION NO
CHOICE. THE SATELLITE DEVOLVES
THROUGH TIME FASTER THAN THEY
CAN APPROACH.

THEY CANNOT CATCH IT.
THEY CANNOT DESTROY IT.

THERE
IS NO HOPE...
WE HAVE...

THEY CANNOT SUCCEED
IN THEIR MISSION.

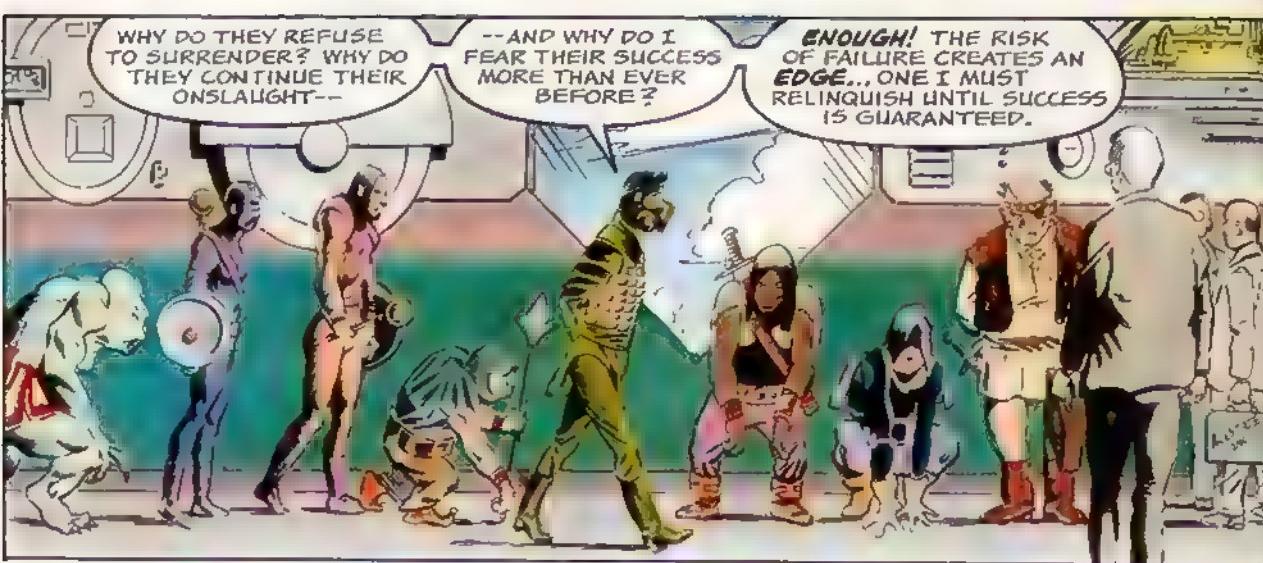
ECLIPSE--
THERE! MY
GOD-- LOOK!



WHY DO THEY REFUSE TO SURRENDER? WHY DO THEY CONTINUE THEIR ONSLAUGHT--

--AND WHY DO I FEAR THEIR SUCCESS MORE THAN EVER BEFORE?

ENOUGH! THE RISK OF FAILURE CREATES AN EDGE... ONE I MUST RELINQUISH UNTIL SUCCESS IS GUARANTEED.



THEY'VE SUCCEEDED IN CREATING DELAYS, BUT THEY FAIL IN THEIR ULTIMATE GOAL.

THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH!

STILL-- I NEED TO MAKE THEIR FAILURE CERTAIN.



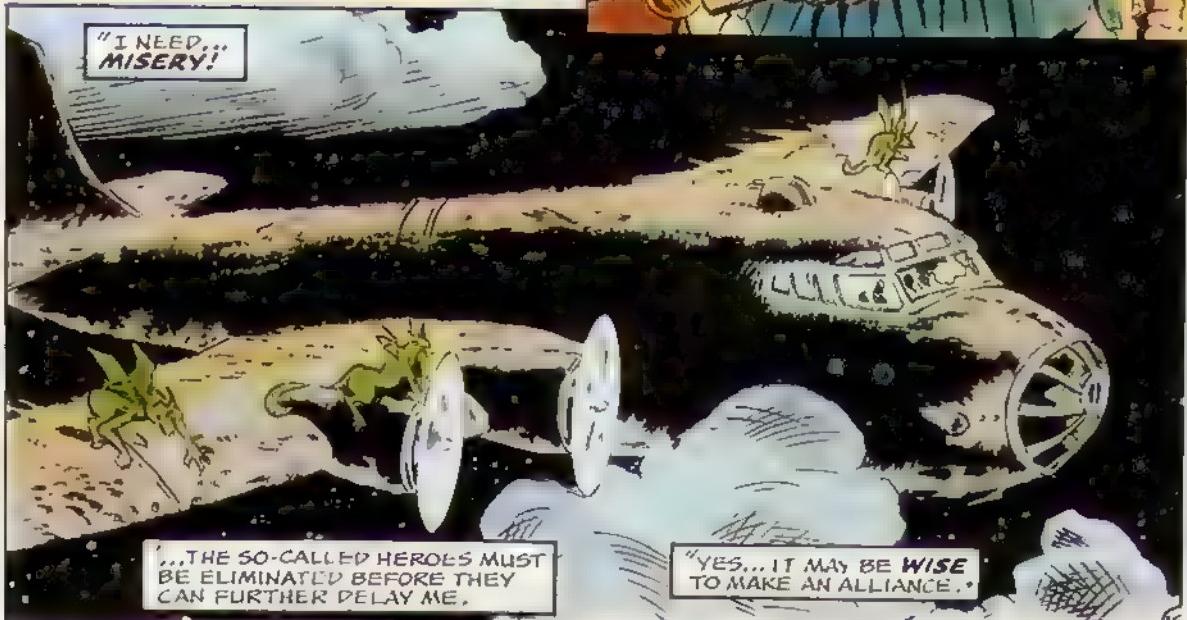
YOU STAND THERE LISTENING IN SILENCE, WAITING FOR ME TO SPOUT WORDS OF WISDOM.

WHY DO I SURROUND MYSELF WITH FOOLS?

AHH, WELL-- SUCH ERRORS WILL NOT CONTINUE ONCE FINAL SUCCESS IS MINE...

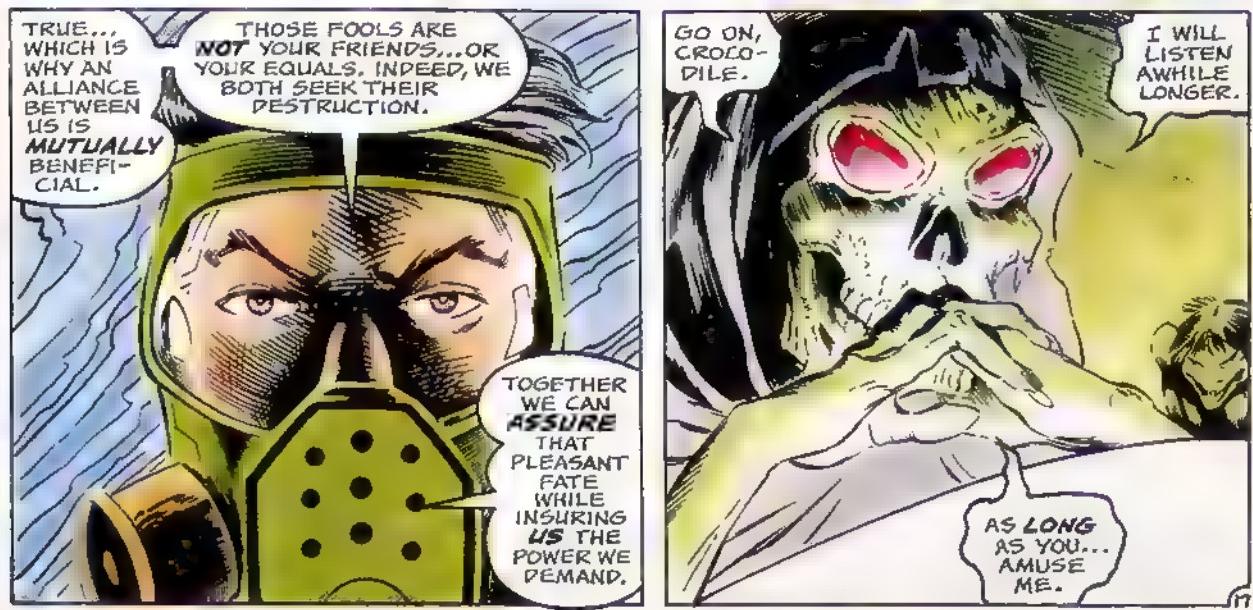
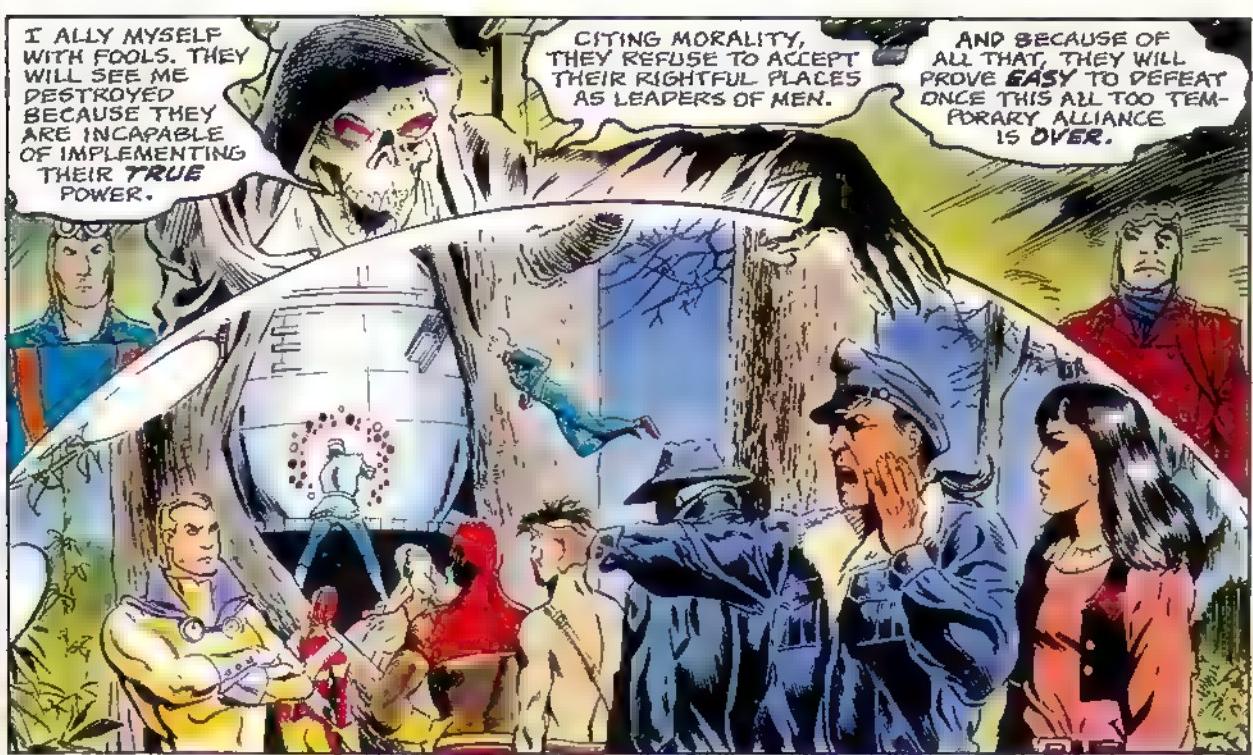


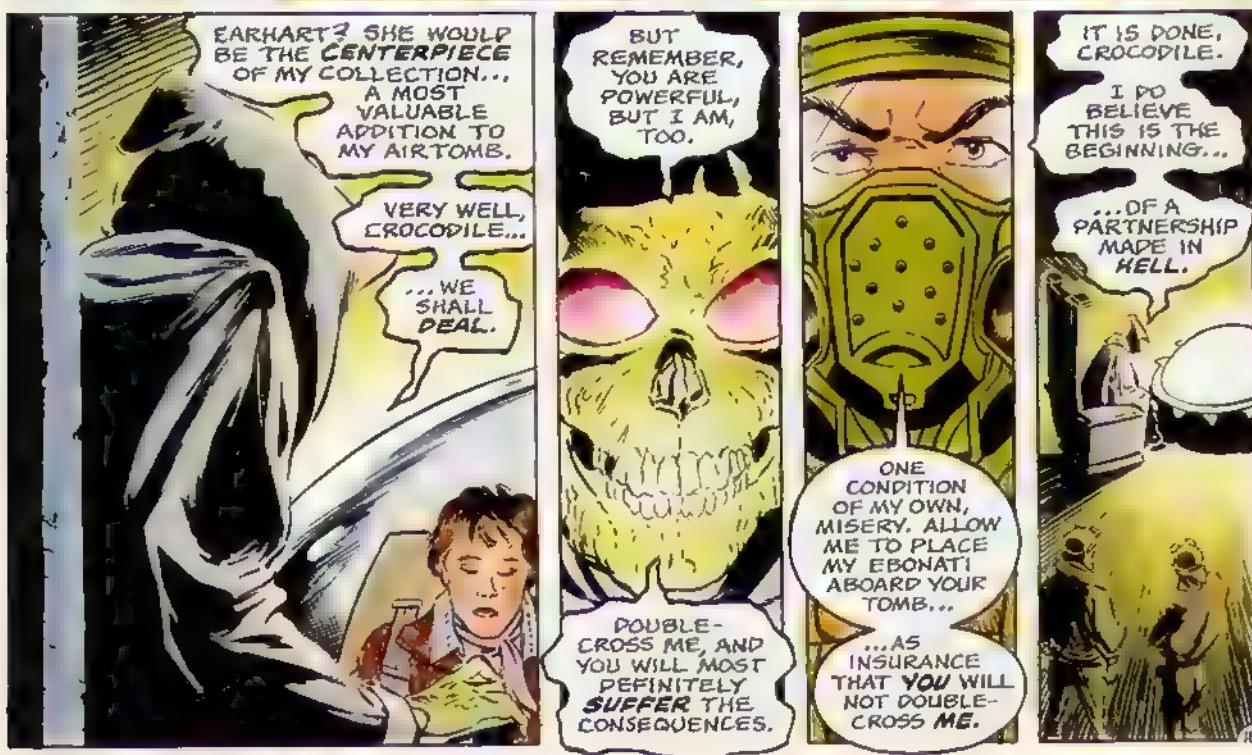
"I NEED MISERY!"



...THE SO-CALLED HEROES MUST BE ELIMINATED BEFORE THEY CAN FURTHER DELAY ME.

"YES... IT MAY BE WISE TO MAKE AN ALLIANCE..."





SIX WORLDS INTO
FIVE WON'T GO, OR
MELD, MELD YOUR
BOAT... GENTLY
DOWN THE STREAM.

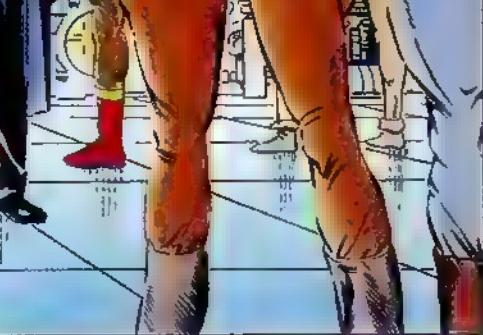
I HOPE
WE'RE DOING
THE RIGHT
THING.

WE HAD
NO CHOICE,
CAZA.

YEAH, I KNOW,
BUT THAT STILL
DOESN'T MAKE
ME FEEL ANY
BETTER.

TROUBLE IS,
WITH TIME ALL
SCREWED UP, I
CAN'T EVEN VREEB
INTO THE FUTURE
AND FIND OUT IF
THERE IS A
FUTURE.

HALF OF US
RETURNING TO
NINE CROC'S
WORLD, AND HALF
OF US STAYING
BEHIND.



LOOK, SCOTT, I JUST
WANNA APOLOGIZE ABOUT
WHAT HAPPENED THE
OTHER DAY.

I MEAN,
LETTING YOU
FALL.

I'M
OKAY...
IT'S
OKAY.

NO... BUT
I WISH IT
WERE.

ANYWAY, I JUST
WANTED TO APOLOGIZE...
TO LET YOU KNOW YOU
CAN DAMN WELL
COUNT ON ME
IN THE FUTURE.

OKAY?

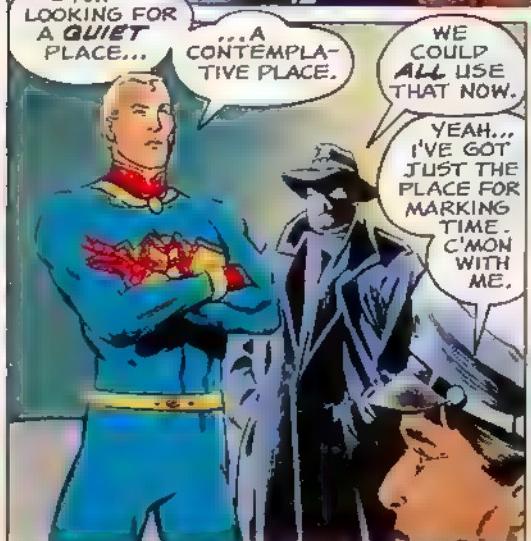
WHEN
I SAW YOU
FALL, SOMETHING
SNAPPED IN
ME. I WASN'T
SO GODDAM
COCKSURE ANY
MORE THAT
SGT. STRIKE
WASN'T
RIGHT.

...I MEAN,
WHAT IF THIS
DAMN HARNESS
IS DRIVING ME
UP THE WALL?

MY BEST FRIEND
SAYS IT IS. SARGE
SAYS IT IS. SO MAYBE
I SHOULD START TAKING
'EM SERIOUSLY.

SURE
... NO
PROBLEM.





Interlude:

MIRACLEMAN

THANK YOU
THANK YOU, THAT WAS BEAUTIFUL.

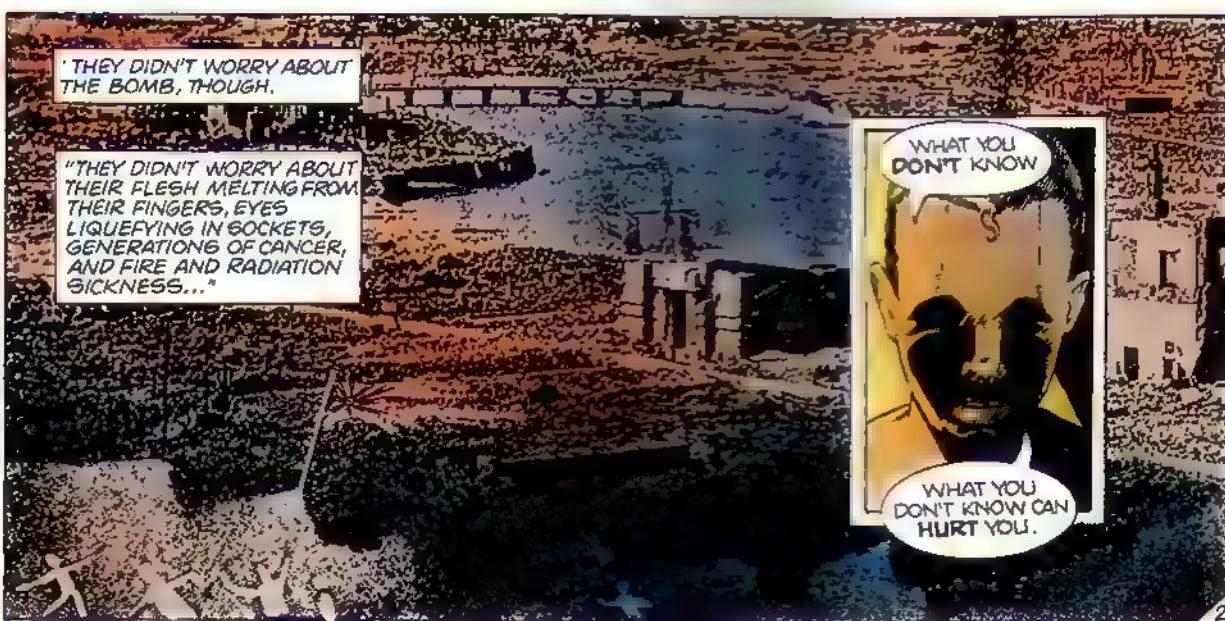
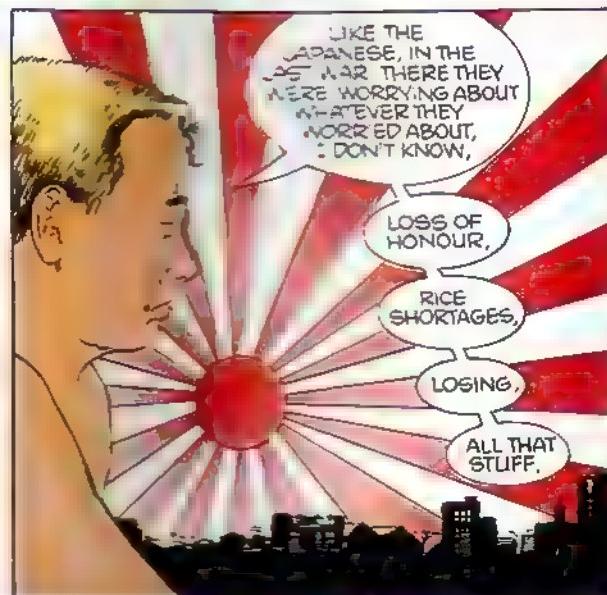
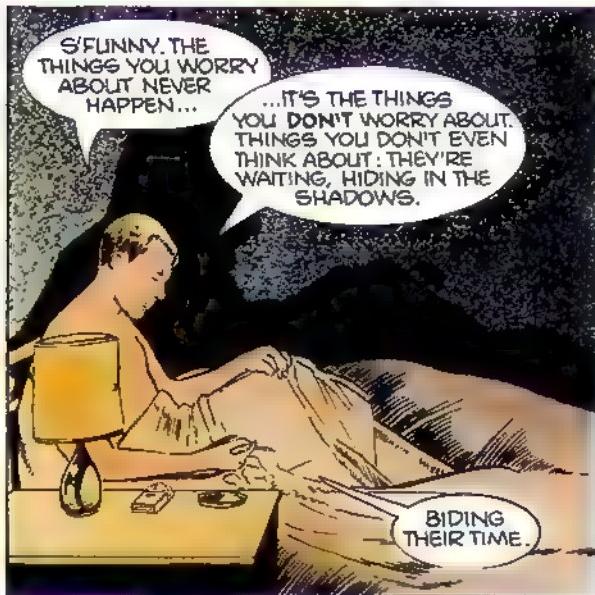
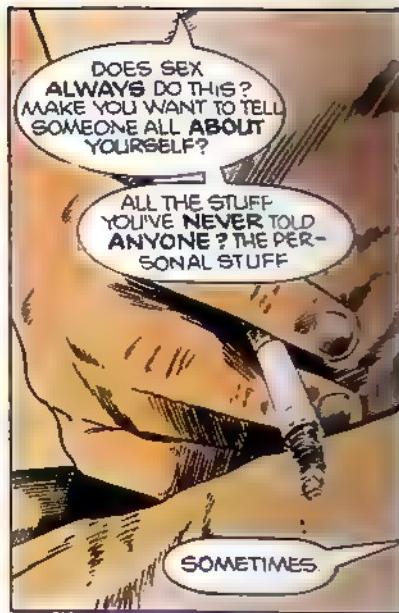
HANG ON A SEC

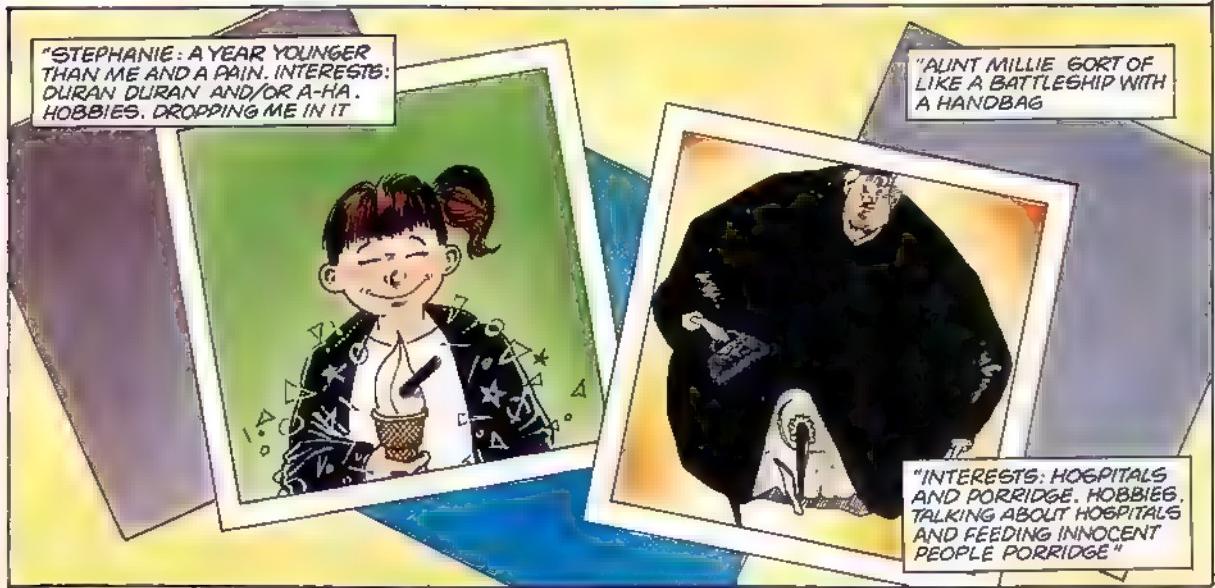
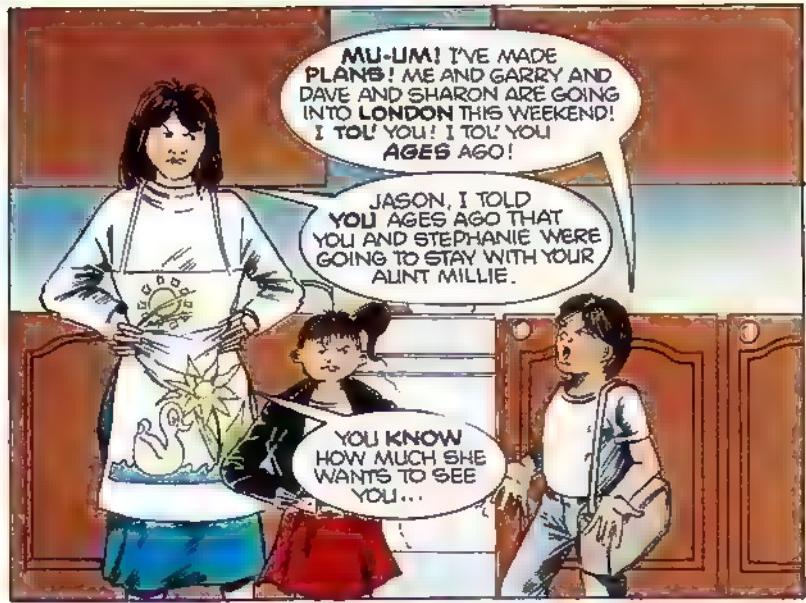
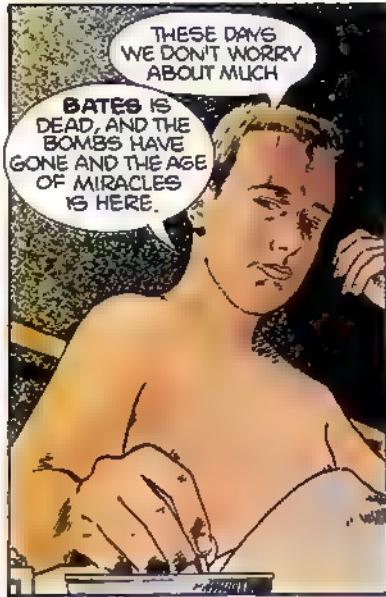


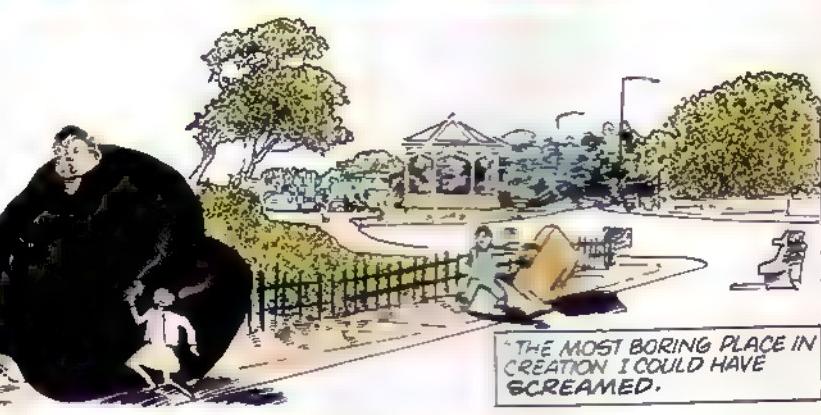
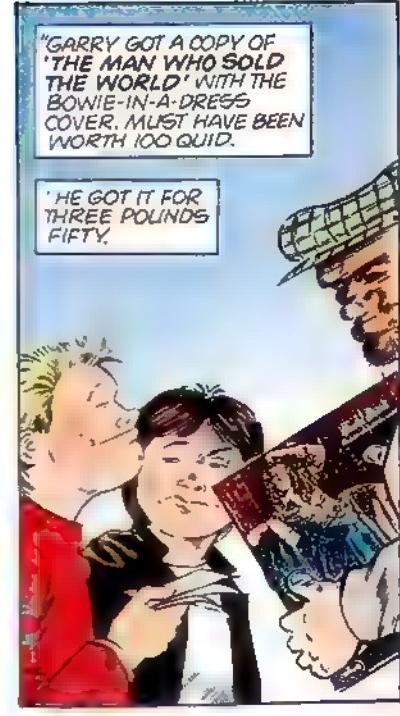
"THAT'S THE THIRD IMPORTANT THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME. I'VE BEEN COUNTING."

NEIL GAIMAN - WRITER
MARK BUCKINGHAM - ARTIST
ELITA FELL - LETTERER
SAM PARSONS - COLORIST
FRED BURKE - EDITOR

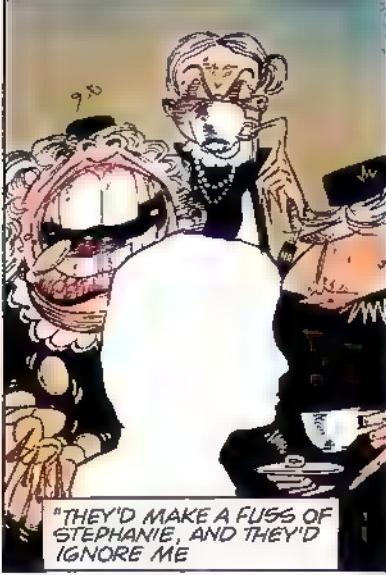
SCREAMING







"THEY'D GO ON AND ON AND ON ABOUT WHOEVER WAS IN HOSPITAL THAT WEEK WITH HER LEG OR INSIDES



"THEY'D MAKE A FUSS OF STEPHANIE, AND THEY'D IGNORE ME"

"AND STEPHANIE MADE FRIENDS WITH THE GIRL NEXT DOOR, SO THEY'D GO OFF AND TALK ABOUT SIMON LE BON, AND I'D BE LEFT TO ENJOY MYSELF ON THE SEAFRONT"



"YOU COULDN'T DO MUCH."



"THERE WAS AN OLD PIER THAT WAS CLOSED OFF UNDER RECONSTRUCTION"



"IT HAD BEEN UNDER RECONSTRUCTION SINCE 1973."

"THERE WERE HORRIBLE GIFT SHOPS."

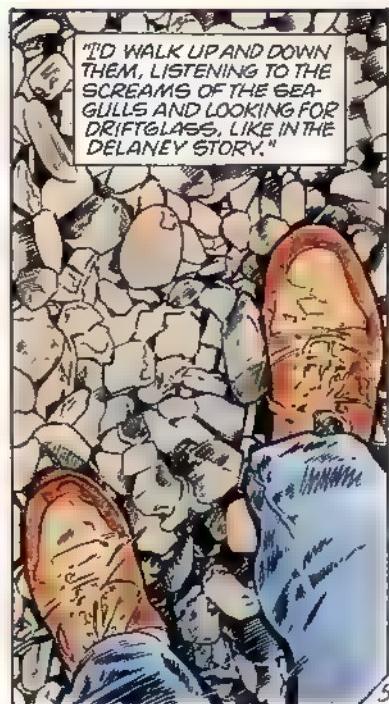


"THEY SOLD SWEETS THAT LOOKED LIKE PEBBLES, KISS-ME-QUICK HATS, AND STICKS OF ROCK WITH 'HAWKING-ON-SEA' THROUGH THE MIDDLE."

"THE SKIES WERE GREY AND TIRED, AND THE SEA WAS A MUDDY BROWN, AND THE BEACHES WERE JUST PEBBLES"



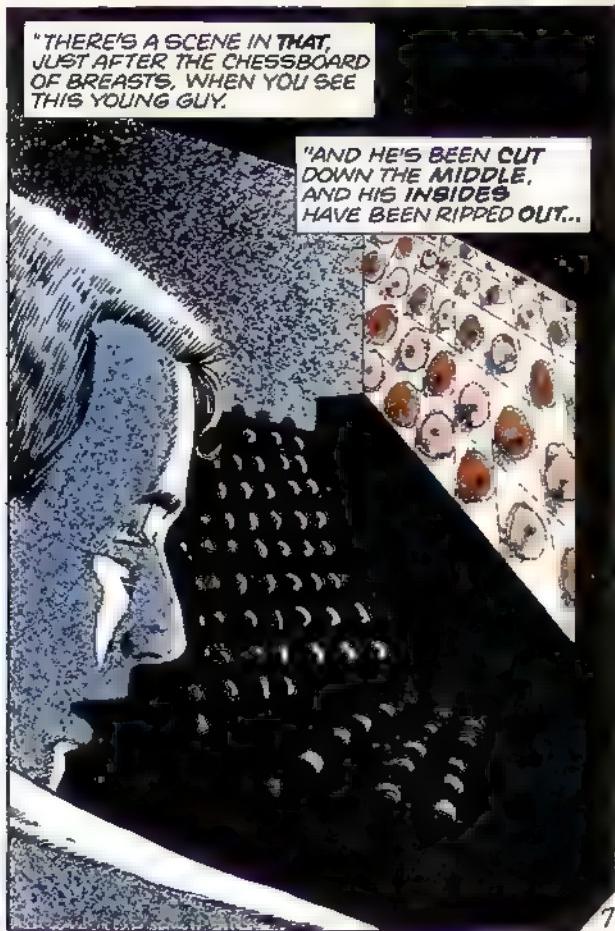
"I'D WALK UP AND DOWN THEM, LISTENING TO THE SCREAMS OF THE SEA-GULLS AND LOOKING FOR DRIFTGLASS, LIKE IN THE DELANEY STORY."



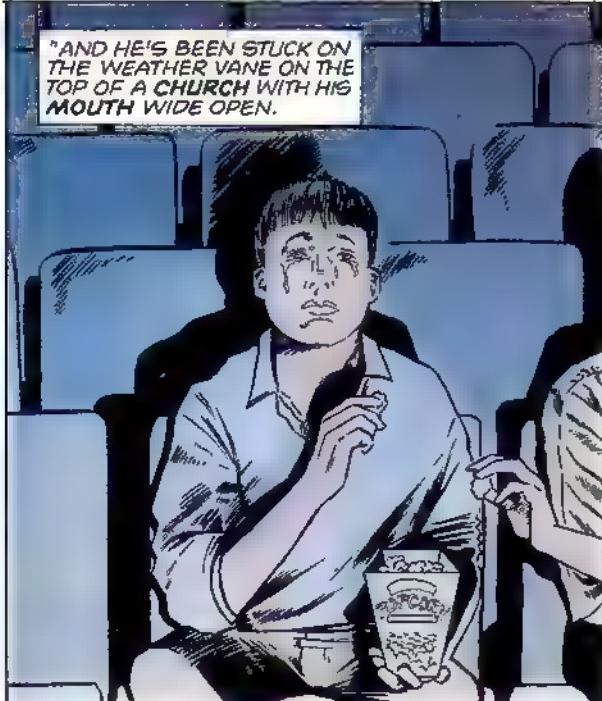


"I THOUGHT I'D GO MAD FROM BOREDOM.
I'D SIT THERE STARING OUT TO SEA,
WONDERING WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF
THEY DROPPED THE BOMB."

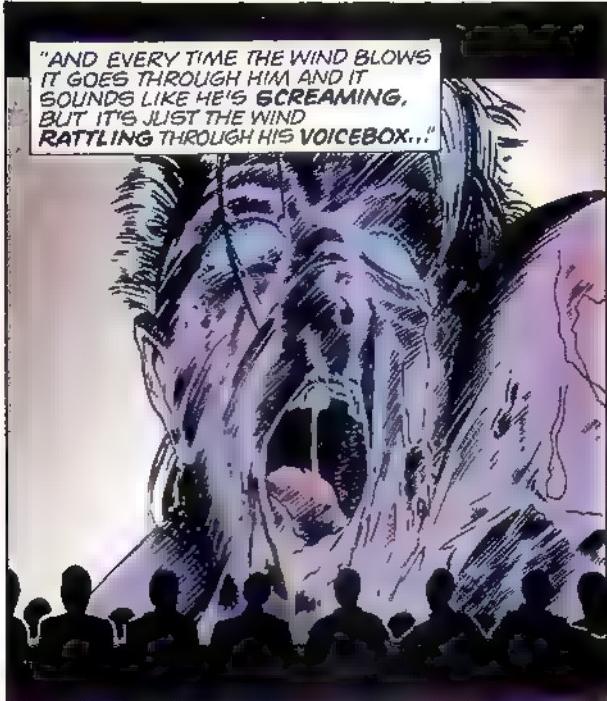




"AND HE'S BEEN STUCK ON THE WEATHER VANE ON THE TOP OF A CHURCH WITH HIS MOUTH WIDE OPEN."



"AND EVERY TIME THE WIND BLOWS IT GOES THROUGH HIM AND IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S SCREAMING, BUT IT'S JUST THE WIND RATTLING THROUGH HIS VOICEBOX..."

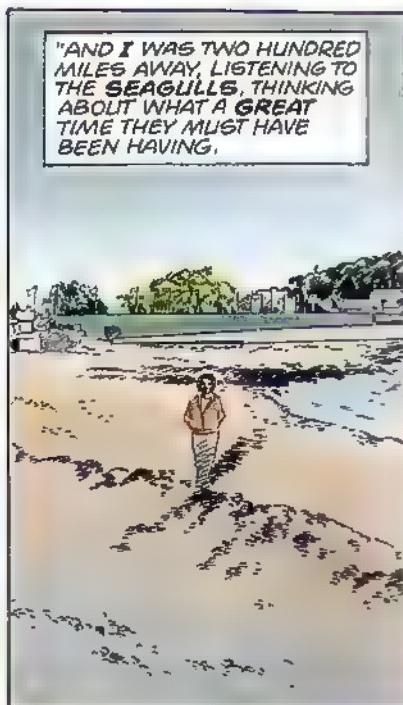


"THAT WAS GARRY"



"HE USED TO CALL ME ANNIE, WHEN WE WERE YOUNGER, 'CAUSE OF MY NAME. JASON OAKLEY. ANNIE OAKLEY."

"AND I WAS TWO HUNDRED MILES AWAY, LISTENING TO THE SEAGULLS, THINKING ABOUT WHAT A GREAT TIME THEY MUST HAVE BEEN HAVING."



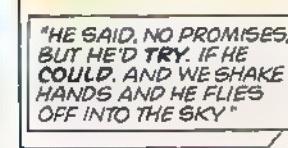
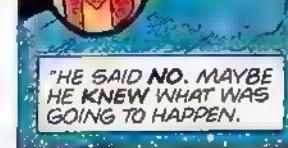
"I POSTED GARRY'S CARD WHEN I GOT BACK AUNT MILLIE SAID."

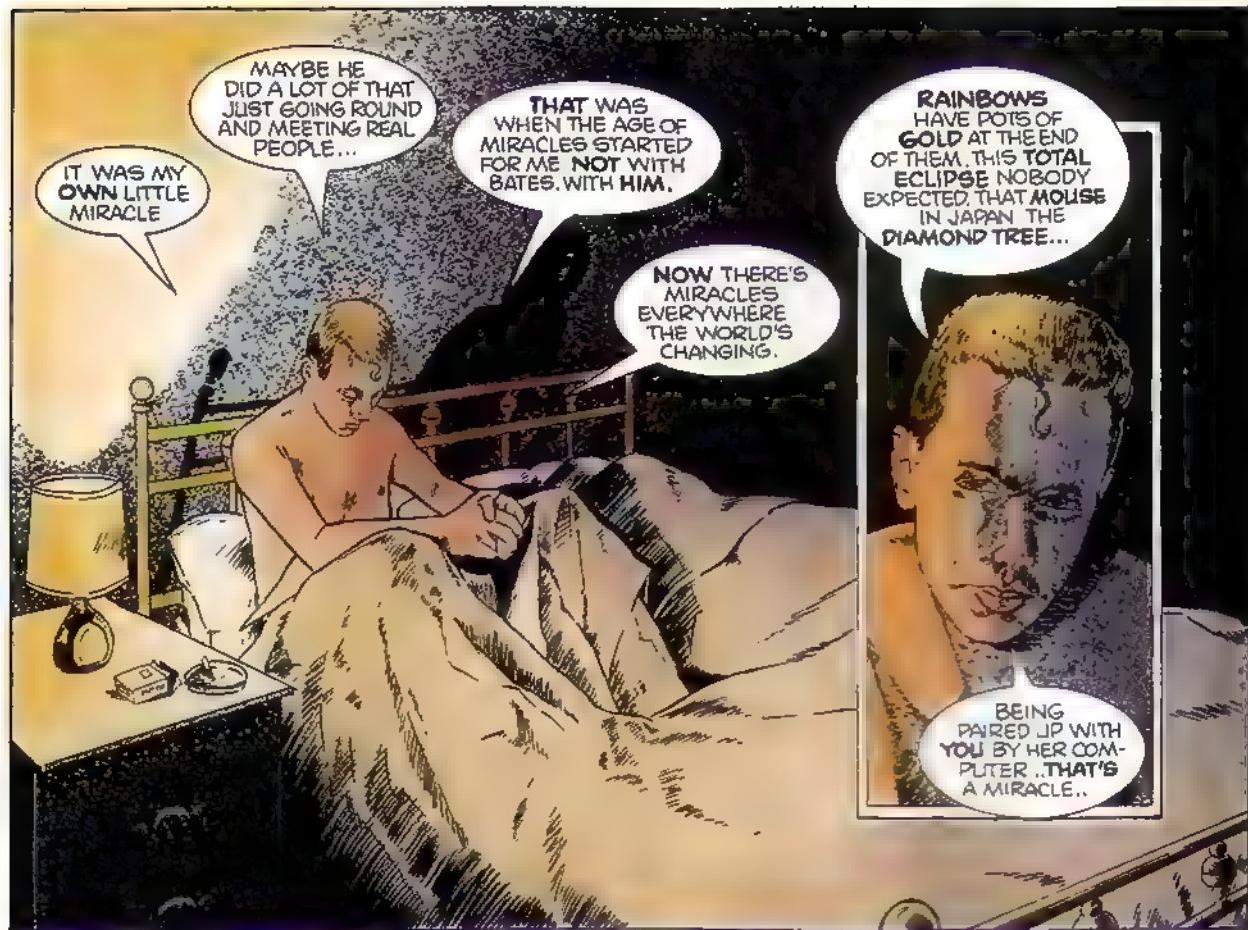


"SHE SAID SHE THOUGHT IT WAS THE RUSSIANS. THERE WAS A NEWSFLASH ON RADIO 2, AND THEN IT WENT DEAD."

"THE LOCAL STATIONS WERE STILL BROADCASTING, BUT THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON EITHER"







MEANWHILE...

WE HAVE
ACHIEVED PARTIAL
SUCCESS, BUT WE MUST
STILL COMPLETE
OUR MISSION.

TELL US
SOMETHING
WE DON'T KNOW
ALREADY.

THE SATELLITES
MUST BE DESTROYED...
AND TO DO SO WE
MUST LEARN WHAT
POWERS THEM.

RETURN TO THE GRAND CANYON -- IT
WAS THERE THAT ZZED FIRST CONCEIVED
THE SATELLITES' SCHEMATICS.

THAT TRUE?

THAT'S
WHERE WE
FIRST MET
ZZED.

I JUST DON'T
KNOW IF WE SHOULD
LEAVE THE TEMPLE,
IF CROCODILE'S
MEN RETURN...

LISTEN, BLONDIE--I'M V
--I WANT
SICKA THIS CRAP. SO IN --NOW!
IF WE C'N FINISH
ALLIGATOR-
BREATH
OFF
FAST...

I SAY WE GO
TO THE CANYON AN'
BLAST IT TO HELL.

MISERY PIP
AS HE PROMISED.
EXCELLENT.

ZZED'S MACHINES ONLY POS-
SESSED SOME OF THE POWER
I NEED. MY MACHINES MUST
SUPPLY THE REST.

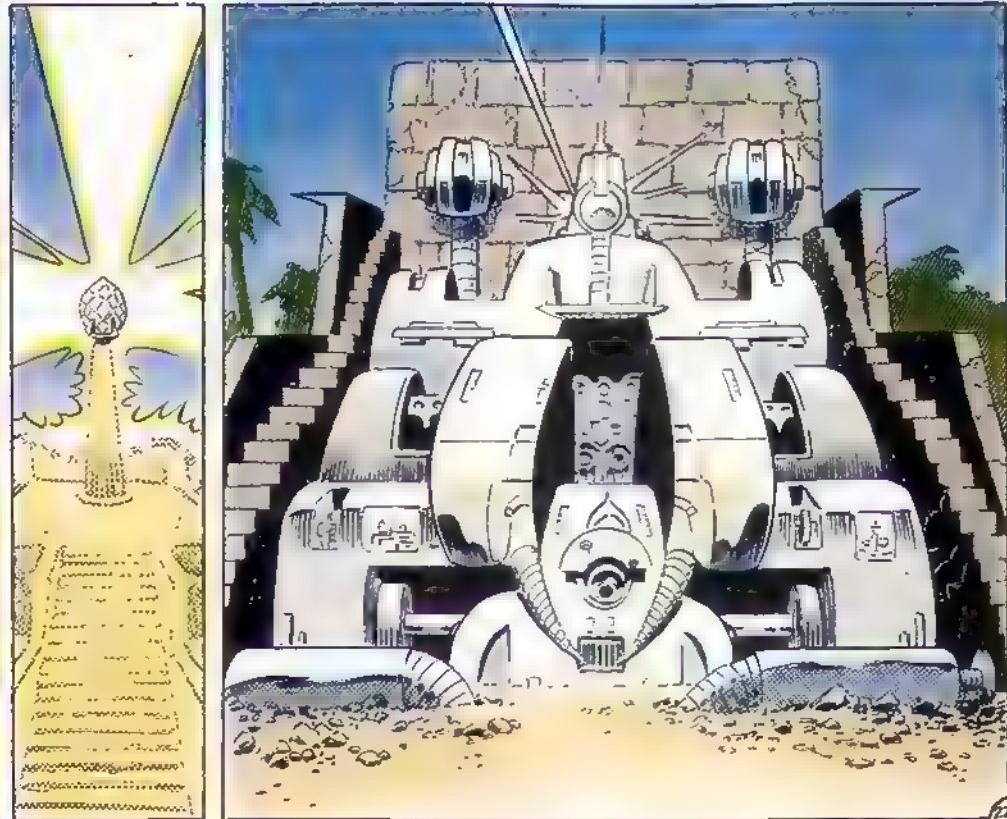
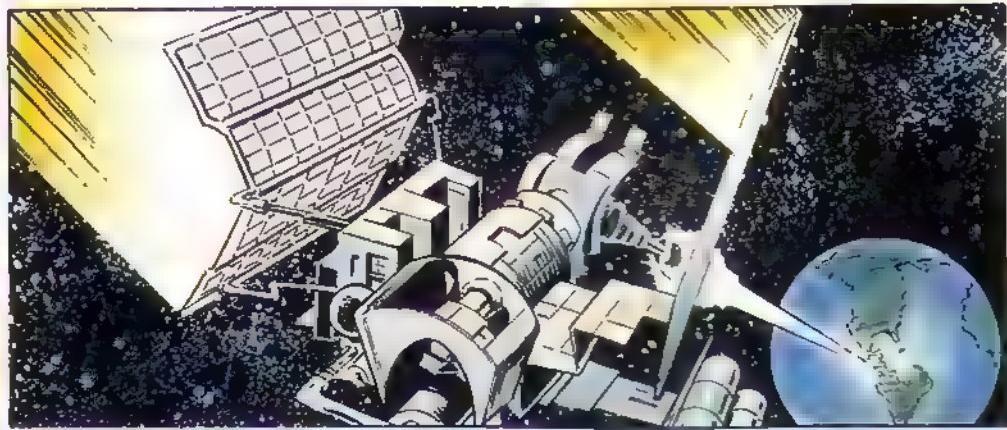
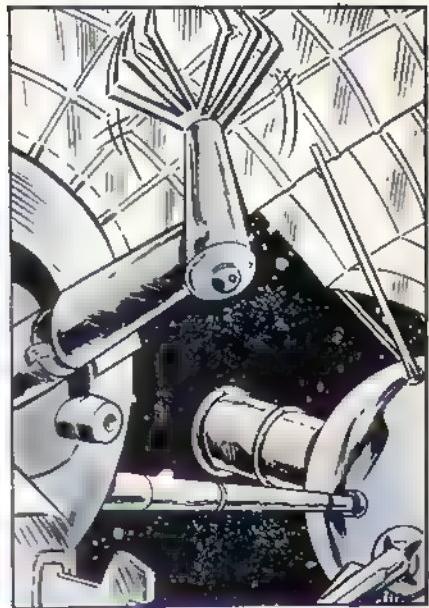


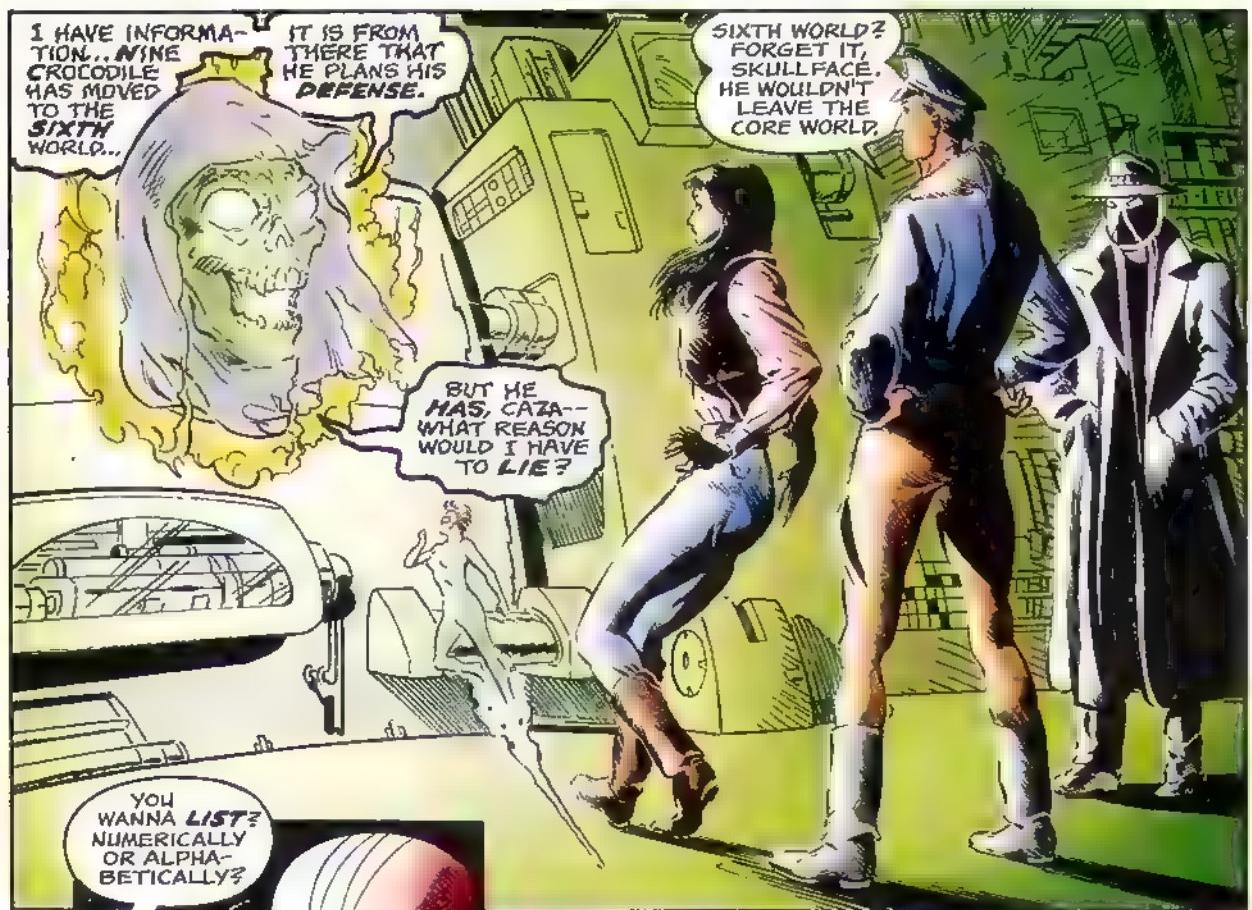
THE TEMPLES
IN ALL TIMES WILL
BE LINKED BY
THE ENERGY I
SUPPLY.

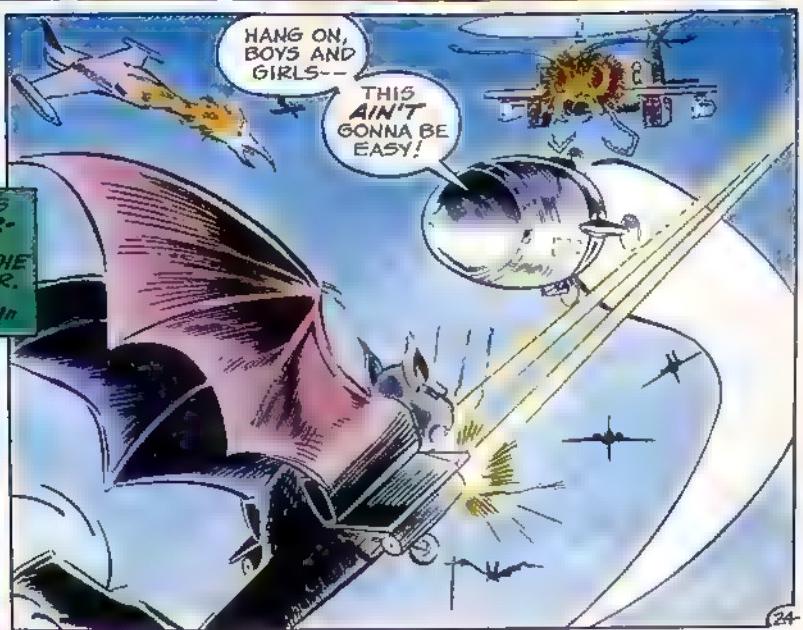
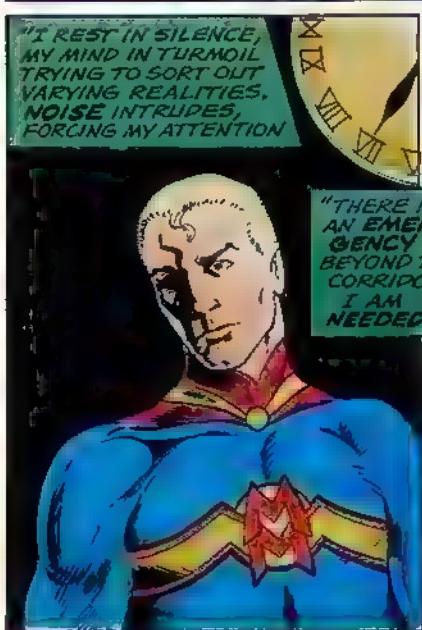
WHEN
ACTIVATED, THE
TEMPLES WILL
FOCUS THEIR
ENERGY
TOGETHER...

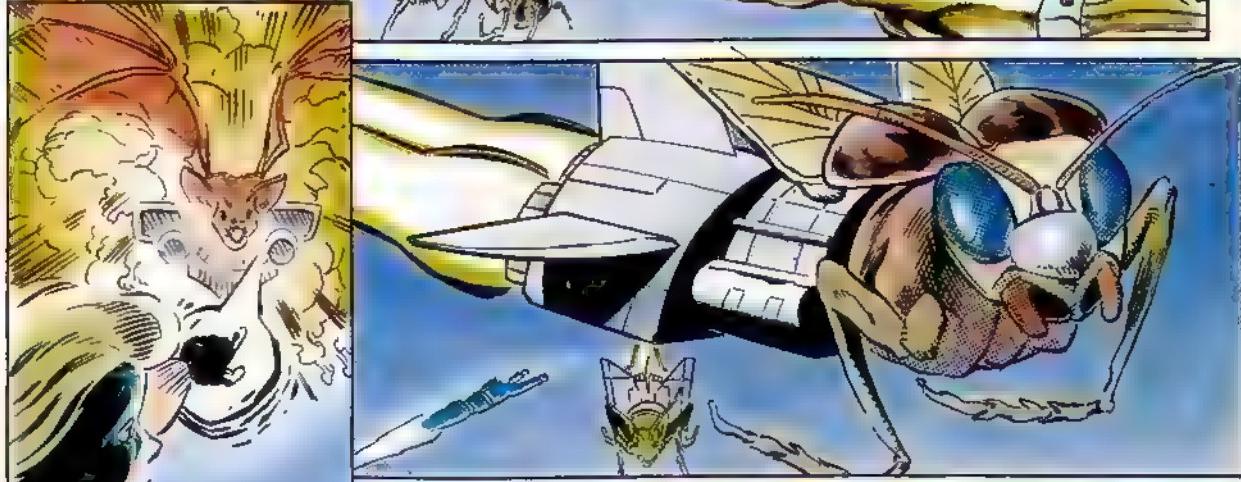
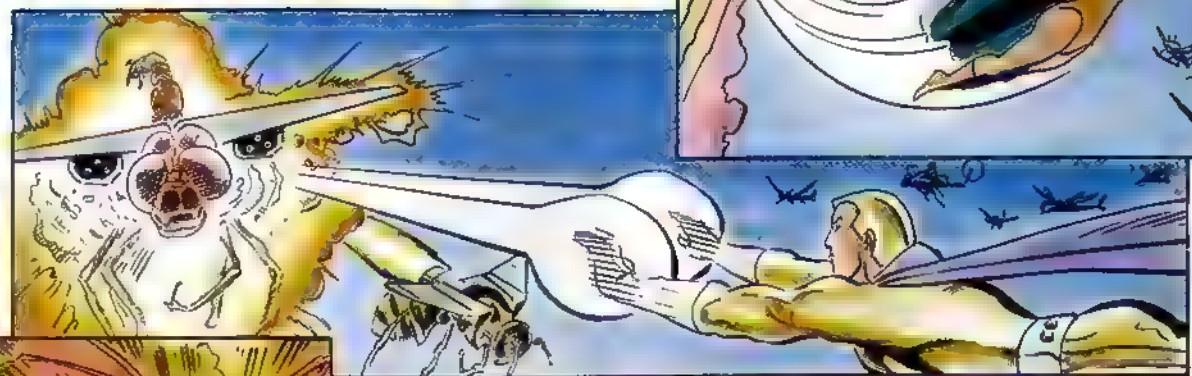
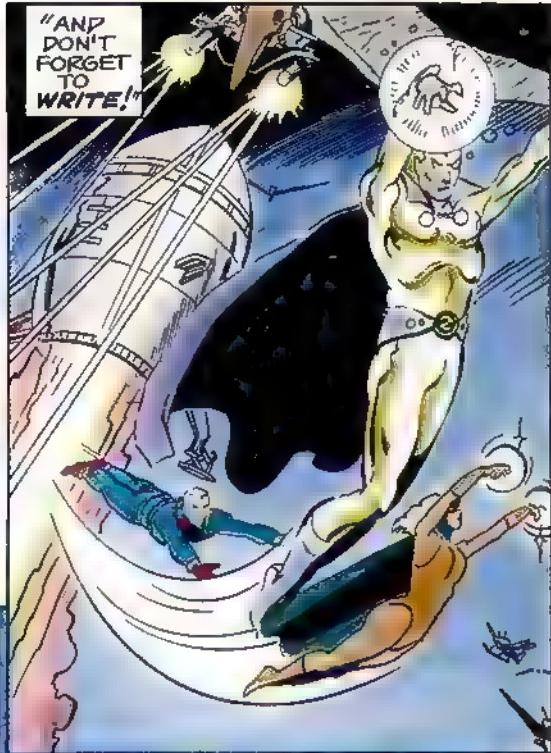
...MOVING
THROUGHOUT
THE TIME
STREAM...

...AND
ALL TIME...
FROM THE
FIRST SHOCK
OF LIGHT TO
ITS FINAL
SILENT
MURMUR...















BALLAMMM!

ARMS ARE
SO WEAK...
BUT I CAN'T
LET THEM
KNOW IT.

HARD EVEN
BREATHING
RIGHT...

..BUT IF I
DON'T TAKE CARE
A' THIS DAMN
TANK--

--IT'LL BLOW
EVERYONE ELSE
TO HELL 'N
BACK!

GET
BACK INTO
THE A.C.E.
MOVE IT--
NOW!

DO WHAT
HE SAYS...
HEAD FOR
THE A.C.E.

ACE'S
GOTTEN
IT FREE...

C'MON--
EVERYBODY
MOVE!

I'LL LAND
HER IN THE
CLEARING A
MILE FROM
HERE.

HURRY
UP AND
LET'S GET OF
THIS HELL
HOLE.

YOU
OKAY,
SCOTT
?

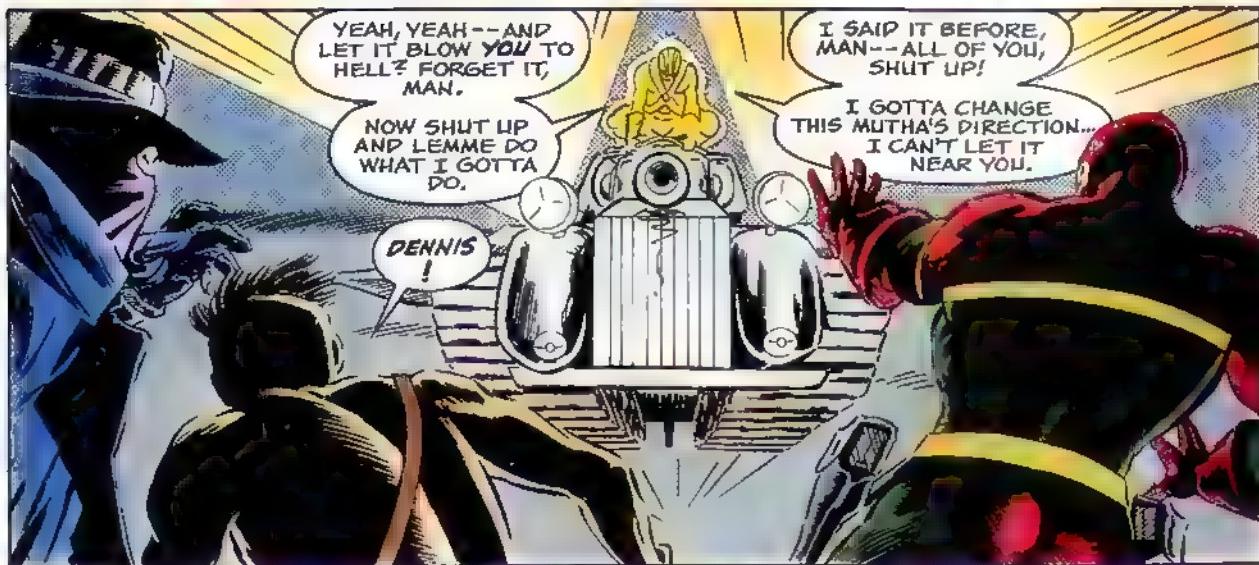
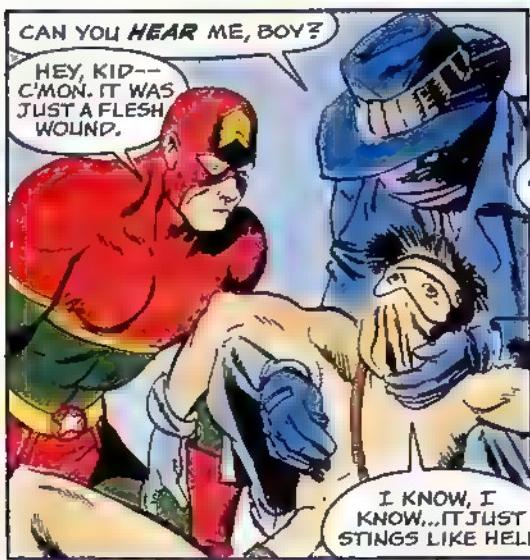
THERE!
I GOT IT.

SCOTT?

MY
GOD!

HANG IN
THERE, LAD...
JUST DON'T
LET GO.









NEXT ISSUE: FINAL ECLIPSE!

California, Here I Come!

When Cat Yronwode and I joined forces in December 1981, we put our heads together to decide where to relocate Eclipse. I've always been a great admirer of Al Jolson, and Cat is a San Francisco native, so California it was. My brother Jan remained in New York, holding down the economic front. Before we could make the final move, though, there was a brief stay in Willow Springs, Missouri, Cat's home at the time. Some previous personal obligations then led us, for ten months, to situate Eclipse's editorial office in America's heartland, Columbia, Missouri.

It was while we were in Columbia that Mark Evanier entered our lives on a permanent basis. Mark co-edited the *Destroyer Duck* benefit comic book in 1981 (where, coincidentally enough, Groo made his first appearance), but our direct dealings with him had been limited.

Now, everybody knows Mark Evanier. Not only is he the co-creator of such stalwart heroes as *Crossfire* and *The DNAgents* (all of whom will be back soon enough, I promise), but he "translates" Groo for Sergio Aragones, writes more television shows than I could list in the four pages allotted me here, and on top of it all, is the secret scripter of some of your favorite newspaper comic strips.

It's been suggested that, like Will Rogers, Mark has never met a person he didn't like. He says there's one exception, but I'm not telling who that person might be, although I think many of you can guess!

At any rate, Mark and Will Meugniot came to us, through their agent Mike Friedrich of Star*Reach, with a proposal for a superhero team. We had never previously published a superhero team series. It wasn't that we didn't want to, but rather that we were more interested in publishing the kind of material other companies were not offering. *The DNAgents*, however, struck us as a unique, solid concept.

Upon visiting Mark's Los Angeles home for the first time, what stuck in my mind most was not necessarily the walls stacked with books, comics, videotapes, and records, nor the juke box and pin-ball machine in the living room, nor the priceless original comics art all over the place, nor the beautiful 1920s



by Dean Mullaney

tiles throughout the house. No, what I remember most was a small collection of figural magnets on Mark's refrigerator. You may laugh now, in 1988, because you can't go to a store these days without those damned magnets popping everywhere you look, but Mark's then-budding collection was my first encounter with this odd artifact. (Then again, Mark also had a plate of plastic spaghetti frozen in mid-air on his counter-top, so he obviously has a penchant for kitchen novelties!)

Over the years, I've seen Mark's refrigerator taken over by magnets representing every conceivable object, from a miniature piece of chocolate cake to a tiny Garfield. Mark claims that he doesn't buy the magnets. He says that people just give him magnets when they come to visit (and in fact, Cat and I are guilty of adding to his collection), but for some reason, I have this vision of Mark going down to the local convenience store at two in the morning to buy the latest variety. After all, I'm sure that like any other collectible, each new piece is only in distribution for a limited time. It's not too far a leap of imagination to picture Mark sitting in his car, hour after hour, night after night, waiting for the distributor's truck; before long, he's forgotten to shave, his diet consists only of corn chips brought by that same truck, and eventually he hijacks the truck wanting more, more, more...magnets.

Gee, it could almost be one of Mark's *Crossfire* plots!

Until we hooked up with Mark, it had been our editorial stance to publish comics aimed at fans older than those reading traditional newsstand comics. We realized that if Eclipse was going to expand—which we wanted it to do—we needed to start attracting readers as an earlier age. We made a very conscious decision to begin offering different comics for different age groups, not, as some publishers have tried, to make every comic book all things to all people. That, we knew, didn't work. It was philosophies such as those that created comics aimed at the lowest common denominator.

It was at this time that Cat eased out of her other writing and freelance editorial jobs and began assuming more and more of the editorial duties at Eclipse. As the business grew, so did our need for strong editorial guidance. I'm not ashamed to say that she's a better editor than I am. She is, and it was her interest in color and knowledge of printing that was largely responsible for what was to come.

With the publication of *The DNAgents* we entered our first expansion period. Simultaneously, we introduced *Eclipse Monthly*, the color comic book replacement for *Eclipse Magazine*.

Some features made it into their own title, such as Max Collins' and Terry Beatty's *Ms. Tree* (now celebrating its 50th issue anniversary!), while others made the transition from the black-and-white magazine to color, notably Trina Robbins' adaptation of Sax Rohmer's "Dope", and an odd, upbeat non-costumed hero named *The Masked Man* by B.C. Boyer.

Actually, when B.C. first sent us his character as a blind submission in 1983, the series was called "White Collar Man." I suggested changing the name to "The Masked Man," feeling somewhat like Captain Joe Patterson of the *New York News* when he renamed Chester Gould's "Plainclothes Tracy" to "Dick Tracy." Aside from a full page illustration of hero Dick Carstairs and his sidekick, Barney McAllister, there was no other artwork included in the presentation. B.C. was too shy to pitch himself as a writer/artist to us. After seeing samples of his storytelling, however, Cat and I were convinced that this guy had what was necessary.

As we later found out, artistic talent runs in his family; his father, Charles Boyer (pronounced as an American name, not like the French actor's!), was the head scenic painter at Disneyland from the park's opening in 1954, and had been chosen to paint Walt Disney's official portrait!

B.C. is one of the nicest people we've ever met. He's actually as upbeat, as warm, (and yes, as naive), as his stories, and although many fans have compared his work to that of Will Eisner, B.C. Boyer had never seen



an Eisner Spirit story until long after he had created *The Masked Man*. When Cat showed him Eisner's stuff, he was naturally impressed. In an age of cynicism and extreme violence, Bruce is a very welcome sight. He's also a great practical joker. If you're ever at the yearly San Diego Comics Convention, try to catch him there.

Speaking of Will Eisner, we were excited when Cat located an unpublished Eisner comic book from 1948 in Will's vault—and really thrilled when Will gave us permission to print it, at long last. The convoluted history of *John Law, Detective* is told in the April 1983 *Eclipse* comic, so I'll refer you there.

By this point, we were going full swing. *Destroyer Duck* was now a continuing series by Steve Gerber and Jack Kirby, the adventures of Sabre were presented by Don McGregor and Billy Graham, and we were very fortunate and proud to present Jerry Siegel's *The Starling* as the back-up series in *Destroyer Duck*.

In July 1983 it was finally time to make our long-planned move to California. Loading everything both of us owned into a 24-foot rental truck, we eased our way West until we couldn't go any farther, settling in the small Russian River town of Guerneville, deep among the redwoods, and only a few miles inland from the Pacific Ocean.

During the rest of 1983 Cat, Jan, and I plotted our 1984 schedule, which, looking back at it, still amazes me. In that year we introduced, among other things, Scott McCloud's *Zot!*, Doug Moench's *Aztec Ace*, and Marshall Rogers' *Cap'n Quick and a Foozle*. The color collection of Englehart and Rogers' *Coyote* marked our return to graphic novels, and we published our first trade paperback book, *Women and the Comics* by Cat and Trina Robbins (a book which, incidentally, will be available soon in a much needed revised edition).

Doug Moench, as if you couldn't tell from his stories, is one of the most fascinating people in comics. Along with Cat and Denny O'Neil, he is a source of endless information and interesting conversation. In

any field of interest, you often encounter people who know little, if anything, about subjects beyond the scope of their specialty. Not so with Doug. After a visit to Doug and Debbie Moench's home for a weekend, you feel as though you've returned from a combination amusement park and library. During one visit, Doug, Cat and I played pinball on his nifty-keen machine for hours on end, while discussing everything from ancient Mayan ruins to the legacy of Aleister Crowley.

Doug's a guy after my own heart. He'll find any excuse to buy a book on a new subject. For the initial run of *Aztec Ace*, Doug, Cat, and I must have collectively spent thousands of dollars buying books which we justified as "research." It got to the point where Doug's bookcases kept growing upward and upward, while Cat and I filled an entire shed with bound paper products. Unfortunately for Cat and I, the Guerneville flood that turned our town into one giant swimming pool in early 1986 also swept that shed away. Doug, luckily, still has his library. The last time I was there, Doug was threatening his neighbors with a skyscraper-like addition to house his collection! I've got this sneaking suspicion that the upcoming return of *Aztec Ace* will spawn a new "research" spree by all of us!

Whereas I had known Doug for many years before we started *Aztec Ace*, Scott McCloud came to us through a blind mail submission, just as had B.C. Boyer. We receive an incredible number of submissions every week, and while there are many people with promise among them, it's rare to find an unknown with talents and foresight as maturely developed as was Scott's when he came to us with *Zot!*

Scott was only 22 when we met him, and he had just completed 14 months in DC's production department. He had been developing *Zot!* for quite some time and pitched it to the publishers who would allow him to retain the copyright ownership. Cat and I decided we wanted to publish *Zot!* before we even finished reading the proposal. In preparing for a two-



Zot! TM and © 1988 Scott McCloud

volume collection of the ten-issue color run of *Zot!*, I went back and reread them, and while I knew how it ended, Scott still managed to take me through every possible emotion along the way. I hope it doesn't sound like a bunch of hype, but I honestly believe *Zot!* to be one of the highest achievements in comics history, and Scott one of our great treasures.

In late 1984, the comics industry experienced an incredible crash. Never mind the reasons for it—let's just say one of the larger players in the field didn't like sharing the market with "upstarts" like Eclipse, Pacific Comics, and others. One of the major results of this crash was the demise of Pacific Comics of San Diego, run by Bill and Steve Schanes. Rumors of Pacific's imminent demise were circulating for months, and when the call came in September that they had closed their doors, I immediately phoned Steve Schanes and negotiated for Eclipse to purchase most of Pacific's titles. I flew down that day, checkbook in hand. I stopped off in Los Angeles first, met with Dave Stevens and signed a contract for *The Rocketeer*, and proceeded to San Diego. Two days later, I was on a plane back to San Francisco with color negatives for, among other projects, *Groo*, *Mr. Monster*, *Strange Days*, *Axel Pressbutton*, *Siegel & Shuster: Dateline 1930s*, and *Somerset Holmes*. Steve Schanes and his wife Ann Fera were very gracious hosts during my brief stay.

We guaranteed payment to all of Pacific's writers and artists, and, by November, we had half a dozen former Pacific titles added to our line-up!

By February, we had firmed up plans to publish the final issues of the Bruce Jones/April Campbell titles *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds* originally designed for Pacific. Since Eclipse was much smaller then than it is now, we just didn't have the resources to swallow an entire other company's output at once. One of the interesting untold stories from that period has to do with some heavy-duty music industry people who invested in *Twisted Tales*. Jan casually mentioned to some of his fellow musicians that we wanted to assume publication of more Pacific titles but didn't have the resources. Surprisingly enough, some

of them turned out to be big comics fans in addition to being rock stars. They wanted to test the waters for jumping into the comics industry and so we formed a trial company with them, called Independent Comics Group, to publish *Twisted Tales*.

To make a long story short, while *Twisted Tales* proved successful, these musicians soon had new tours starting, and after a while their dreams of becoming comics impresarios gave way to the more glamorous prospect of remaining rock stars, while keeping comics as their hobby.

Around this time we realized that we needed more people on staff (no kidding!). Various interns were working at Eclipse during this period, but none turned out to be permanently interested...or qualified. That is, until Sean Deming walked through the door.

Sean began as an intern in February 1985, and if you read Cat's editorials from that time, you'll learn that Sean got a full-time position because he was the only one in the office who could find the "hidden" electrical sockets. Actually, he had a lot more in his résumé than that. Sean's one of the few people I've ever met who can think, react, and move as fast as Cat and I can under pressure. In a deadline business like comics, that's an attribute above most others. So what if he needs the computer's spell-checker to make his documents readable?—so do many writers in the field! Seriously, most of us in the comics industry are here because we love comics and enjoy putting them together. In a small, closely-knit office like ours, it's particularly important that everyone not only get along, but genuinely like each other. I can't think of many people I've met in the last five years whom I like as much as Sean. He also has more patience than any of us here and plays convincing psychopaths in local plays to boot!

Next Issue: the staff expands again as Bruce Palley joins the inner sanctum, and we have Editors Up the Kazoo! Plus the coming of Miracleman, Scout, and Airboy—and the return of the Independent Comics Group—in the next and final chapter in this series on Eclipse's first ten years.

WHO'S WHO IN TOTAL ECLIPSE



Dr. Eclipse

The immortal Zzed was struck by a diluted cosmic ray which, instead of killing him, gave him great power.



Aztec Ace

The evil scientist Emil Gargunza twisted Mike Moran's life to suit his own needs. It backfired.

Miracleman



Bridget

Stolen from 1940, Bridget Kronopoulos crowned herself queen of Egypt and now accompanies Aztec Ace in his battles.



Black Terror

Orrin Murphy fights crime on a corrupt world where Al Capone is the vice-president of the U.S.



Hirota

David Nelson II's first WWII "kill," Japanese ace Saburo Hirota went on to become a trusted friend and tutor for the young Davy Nelson.



A mute Bogantillan freedom fighter, Marisa Ortega salvaged an old chopper of Skywolf's and now emulates him.

La Lupina



Nine-Crocodile

Aztec Ace's arch enemy would destroy time itself to rule his limbo in peace.



Head

Ace's former lab assistant now finds himself with no body—and with the implanted persona of Sigmund Freud in his 23rd century brain.



Iron Ace

Air Fighter Ronald Britain almost died in an accident, but advanced Nelson Aviation cyborg armor allows him to continue life.



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Rebirth

It comes when least expected, snatching the immortal Zzed from his long-awaited suicide. The death beam with the power to destroy both Zzed and the universe has been intercepted by Tachyon, who vanished in a blinding flash.

Now the remains of that cosmic energy have found their intended target, and Zzed bathes in the agonizing glow, screaming. Our heroes can only watch and wait as the stunning transformation takes place.

Zzed is no more.

In his place is a new being, Dr. Eclipse, blessed with the knowledge and power of untold galaxies. But there is still a grave danger: Nine-Crocodile's temple machinery threatens the very fabric of time itself. Yet another hero must die if the universe is to be saved. Billions of lives hang in the balance.

Total Eclipse

It's Eclipse Comics' Tenth Anniversary. In this and future issues, you'll encounter Airboy, Valkyrie, Skywolf, Miracleman, The Prowler, Strike, the Heap, Aztec Ace and virtually every star from Eclipse's first decade of innovative comics publishing.

Marv Wolfman, writer, is the author of *The New Teen Titans*, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, *Tomb of Dracula*, and countless other acclaimed comic books. The Zzed saga is his most intricate plot to date.

Bo Hampton, pencil artist, is well-known for his detailed linework and powerful layouts in books such as *Airboy*, *Lost Planet*, *Luger*, and *The New Mutants*. *Total Eclipse* is a new peak in his artistic development.

Rick Bryant, ink artist, has graced the pages of *Miracleman*, *Marvel Fanfare*, *Moon Knight*, and *World of Krypton*. In *Total Eclipse*, he perfectly complements Hampton's detail with his own dynamic style.

ECLIPSE  BOOKS™

